

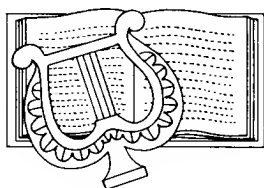
ANDREW LORIMER

BY W. STEPHENS HAYWARD



AUTHOR OF "THE BLACK ANGEL"

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ANDREW LORIMER;

OR,

The Young Surgeon of Fostonhaugh.



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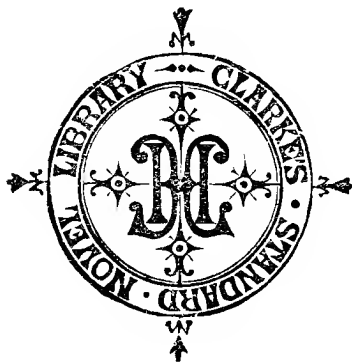
The Young Surgeon of Festonhough.

BY

W. STEPHENS HAYWARD,

AUTHOR OF

"THE BLACK ANGEL," "STAR OF THE SOUTH," "FIERY CROSS,"
"REBEL PRIVATEER," "MUTINY OF THE THUNDER," "GOLDEN PEEP,"
"ROBERT THE ROVER," "CLOUD KING," "IDOL'S EVE,"
"RODNEY RAY," "MILDRED'S CROSS,"
"LORD SCATTERBRAIN,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.



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IDOL'S EYE.
ONE IN A THOUSAND, and
ROBERT THE ROVER.

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Publisher's Notice.

THE sudden and unexpected death of Mr. W Stephens Hayward before his novel "ANDREW LORIMER" was completed, left two courses open—either to produce the work as a fragment, or to conclude it by another hand. The Publisher in the interests of the reader has adopted, he trusts not unsuccessfully, this latter alternative. It may interest the Public to know that the last words written by Mr. Hayward are to be found on page 268: for all that follows Dr. Charles M. Clarke is alone responsible.

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ANDREW LORIMER.



CHAPTER I.

COLONEL HECTOR FEATHERSTONEHAUGH.

THE scene of the event related in this story is laid in Hampshire, on the borders of that vast tract of wild and unreclaimed country called the New Forest.

This enormous expanse of land was uncultivated, without roads, left to the wild birds and beasts which inhabit its gloomy recesses ; to the charcoal burner, who in pursuit of his calling penetrated a little way into the interior of the great wood, and to the sportsman, who, gun on shoulder, and hunting knife on hip, followed by great fierce dogs, plunged far into the bosom of the great gloomy wilderness of trees in search of hares, deer, and the savage wild boar. These, and the poachers and outlaws escaped or hiding from justice, were the only ones who knew aught of the interior of the New Forest.

Comprised within the forest were great swamps, rivulets, streams, and ponds of fresh water, large enough to be called small lakes. Near the outskirts, too, were open glades and clearings, which yet were sufficiently far away from the world

beyond to be utterly lonely and desolate. These were favourite spots for duels, where many a dashing gentleman of the country around had measured his length on the sward, and yielded up his life.

For duels were common in those days, when every gentleman wore a sword, and would give or accept a challenge on the slightest provocation.

There were no human habitations, save the rude shelter of boughs, branches, and bark, which certain outlaws hiding from justice had constructed.

But these were few, and a man might wander for days—ay, weeks even—amidst the eternal—almost endless, it seemed—groves and vistas of trees, nearly shutting out the light of day by their wide spreading branches, without seeing any token to tell him that other mortals beside himself had ever trodden those sylvan solitudes.

It is true there were a few huts of charcoal burners and wood-cutters which were actually within the forest boundaries, but these were close to the edge, although hidden within the trees, only as a rule a few minutes' walk from the outer world—the broad light of open day

It is in a large village, or a very small town, near this wilderness of trees, of swamp, marsh, and undergrowth, that our story opens.

The village is called Fostonhaugh—obviously a corruption of Featherstonehaugh, the name of an ancient Hampshire family having a mansion and estates in the neighbourhood.

The village numbered perhaps two thousand souls.

The resident gentry consisted solely of the clergyman and young Squire Betwood of the Manor House.

The great families had their estates and houses in the open country, and seldom troubled Feston-haugh with their presence.

Of these local magnates, the chief were Colonel Featherstonehaugh, who with his only daughter, Diana, occupied the old family house on his estate, a few miles distant from the town which had taken its name from his ancestors, or from which his ancestors had taken the name.

The present representative of the ancient family, Colonel Hector Featherstonehaugh, would have taken the assertion of the latter as a bitter insult on the part of any man, and would have resented it in a prompt and terrible way.

We say terrible, for Colonel Featherstonehaugh had fought thirteen duels, and of these he had slain his antagonists in eleven and desperately wounded the other two.

His favourite weapon was the sword, for he was a splendid fencer, with a wrist and arm of steel, an eagle-eye, and a heart to which fear was an utter stranger.

Besides, he was known as "Featherstonehaugh of the deadly hand."

But he was equally skilful with the pistol, and had been known to remark calmly to his second, before the signal to fire was given, the very spot, within an inch or so, where he would hit his man.

But of this more anon.

The next country house and estate to that of the fierce Colonel with the terrible reputation as a man-slayer was that of the Honourable Mrs. Montaigne, a widow lady with two sons, Jasper and Valentine, both fine young men—good types of the English gentleman of the period.

Both Colonel Featherstonehaugh and Madame

Montaigne, as she was known in the neighbourhood, were wealthy. Each had large and fertile estates; each could look from the windows of their respective houses, and gazing in one direction see only their own property as far as the eye could reach.

As we have said, the Colonel's big brick Elizabethan house was called the Haugh; that of Madame Montaigne, built of grey stone, and on an eminence, was called the Eyrie.

Now, between the two families of Featherstonehaugh and Montaigne, both ancient, both of noble blood, there had existed for generations a bitter feud—a vendetta as fierce, relentless, and unforgiving as ever raged in Corsica, that island of family enmities, of implacable and unextinguishable hatreds.

But of this also, as of the Colonel's terrible renown as a duellist, more anon.

The estate adjoining to these two—for it lay at the back overshadowing and overlapping each—was in extent five times as great as both put together.

Its owner was an Italian nobleman, the son of an Italian father but English mother, from which latter he inherited this Hampshire property.

He was the second son of an Italian prince, ruler of one of the petty states of Central Italy; sheltered and protected by the covering wings of the then all powerful and tyrannical Austria.

His brother was monarch of this little Italian kingdom, and at his court the Marquis Lunigi Monte Cerro, though educated in England, spent most of his time.

But having had a violent quarrel with his elder brother, the prince, he left Italy in disgust,

and announced his intention of residing on his English estates, and seeking, as had done his father, a wife from among the fair daughters of Albion.

Being a man of great wealth, this determination on his part excited great interest, not only in the neighbourhood of his estates, but also in the higher circles amongst the aristocracy of the land, and even at the court of St. James.

There was much speculation as to what court beauty the Marquis Lunigi Monte Cerro would fix upon to share his title, estates, and fortune of at least thirty thousand pounds a year.

All agreed that it would be a young lady of rank at least equal to his own, and also it was thought probable that the marquis would seek to increase his already princely fortune by an alliance with an heiress.

But the world and the gossips were wrong this time, as they often are, and the marquis had not long returned to England, after a six years' absence, before it was rumoured—was matter of common talk—that he had lost his heart to, and determined to bestow his hand upon, Diana, the only and lovely daughter of the terrible Colonel Hector Featherstonehaugh.

But of this, too, more anon.

Let us return now to the village of Festonhaugh, and introduce the reader to a plain, humble, human, and noble-minded man—Dr. Andrew Lorimer, surgeon and general practitioner.

CHAPTER II.

ANDREW LORIMER.

ANDREW LORIMER came to Festonhaugh an utterly unknown man, and taking an empty house, with a garden and orchard behind, and a small garden, bounded by white pailings, in front, on which was a brass plate, bearing this inscription:—

ANDREW LORIMER,
SURGEON AND APOTHECARY.

Advice to the poor gratis.

There was already a surgeon in Festonhaugh, a middle-aged man, who had hitherto had the practice of the whole neighbourhood for many miles round.

Doctor James Robertson, then, looked upon the new-comer—the intruder, as he regarded him—with a very evil eye.

He did all he could, by positive assertion and by inuendo, to convey the impression that Andrew Lorimer was no better than a quack—an ignorant adventurer.

The notice on the brass plate of the new-comer especially incensed the elder practitioner—*Advice to the poor gratis.*

Was ever such a thing heard of—preposterous and unprofessional—merely a bait, a blind, to

catch the rich patient by an affectation of charity to the poor.

Such, and much more, did Doctor Robertson set afloat about his young rival.

James Robertson was a man who, though he loved the guineas of the wealthy, did not disdain the shillings and groats of the poor.

All this, and the fact of his being utterly unknown, told upon Andrew Lorimer; and it was weeks, months even, before he got any patients.

But by degrees poor men and women dropped in, just to give the new man a trial.

Patients who came to Andrew Lorimer had paid their money, and received a few curt words of advice, with perhaps a bottle of medicine, from Doctor Robertson, and had derived no benefit.

These, attracted by the notice, "Advice to the poor gratis," gave him a trial.

Andrew Lorimer treated them with kindness, patience, and skill, and uniformly did them good, even where it was impossible to effect a rapid cure.

Soon others came, and were treated with the same beneficial result.

From labouring men, their wives, and families, the young surgeon stedfastly refused to receive a farthing.

But soon his patience, kindness, and, above all, his successful treatment, got noised about; and before long, he received visits from the tradesmen of the village and the farmers of the adjoining county.

The village blacksmith received a terrible kick whilst shoeing a horse, which smashed the bone of his right leg.

He was taken to Doctor Robertson's, who at

once declared that the leg must be cut off, and proceeded to make preparations for performing the operation.

"I'm hanged if you do, though!" cried the man of the hammer and forge. "When I go out of the world it shall be as I came into it, with all my limbs on me. Take me to the new doctor up town."

"Oh, yes! take him away," said Doctor Robertson, satirically. "Mr. Lorimer will soon put him out of his misery."

So they took him up to Andrew Lorimer's house, up town.

The young surgeon examined the broken limb carefully.

It was a bad case—a compound fracture. Nevertheless, Lorimer gave it as his opinion that he could save the leg if the blacksmith abided strictly by his instructions.

"You must neither drink beer nor gin, not a drop of spirits of any kind, without my permission."

"All right, sir; save my leg, that's all I want."

"For the first fortnight, at least, you must remain here under my immediate eye. I will have a bed made up for you in the little room next to the surgery."

"Oh, lor', doctor! long as I can remember, I've never slept away from the sound of the hammer and forge. I don't believe as how I could."

"You must try; and if you cannot, I will give you something that will bring sleep to your eyes."

"Very well, sir, you know best."

The young surgeon then went to work, set the leg, and placed it carefully in splints. Ether and

chloroform were not discovered then, and the sturdy blacksmith, who bore the operation without a groan, fainted away once from pain.

But it was done, and successfully, and in less than two months he could walk with crutches ; in three, with the aid of a stick, and in four, declared he was as good a man as ever he was.

The young man would not take any money for his cure, for the blacksmith was a poor man, with a large family, and all the time he was laid up his assistant and apprentice earned but little at the forge.

The man who ventured after that to say aught disparaging of Doctor Lorimer in the presence of the brawny blacksmith, would have had to fight, or receive a sound thrashing, that is a certainty.

This was a great feather in the cap of Andrew Lorimer, and a severe blow to Doctor James Robertson, for the news flew far and wide that the new doctor had cured the blacksmith, whose leg was smashed all to bits, though Doctor Robertson wanted to cut it off.

And so, day by day, week by week, month by month, fresh patients came, some from a distance, to be treated by the new doctor of Festonhaugh, as he was called, and ere he had been there a twelvemonth, he had quite a respectable practice.

He was idolised by the poor, liked and respected by his middle-class patients.

In fact, Andrew Lorimer was a rising man—in a fair way to prosperity, perhaps even fortune.

In manner, he was unassuming, as polite to a poor old day-labourer, or his aged wife, as he would be to rich Farmer Hewit, one of his best patients.

His habits were retiring, and, except at church

on a Sunday, nobody saw anything of Andrew Lorimer except when he was doing his rounds, visiting his patients.

Long after everyone else had retired to rest, a light might be seen in the window of a room on the first floor of the new surgeon's house.

This was his study; and here, till two and three o'clock in the morning, the young doctor would prosecute his researches in science, medicine, and philosophy.

As to his character, the breath of scandal passed him.

His life was absolutely blameless.

He had an old woman of the village to do his housework, and a big boy to look after the horse and gig, and take out medicine, and that was all.

He lived in a simple, frugal manner; liked by those who knew him, loved by those who had been under his care medically, and respected by all.

And what man can wish for a more noble reputation than that of a kind-hearted Christian gentleman, doing his duty to all men.

Doctor James Robertson saw that he was vanquished so far as the tradesmen and farmers of the country families round were concerned.

But he hugged one consolation to his soul.

Our young man had not among his patients any of the county families—the rich and aristocratic people, such as Colonel Featherstonehaugh, Madame Montaigne, and half a score more.

No, these were still his own, and his upstart rival, unknown, without influence, or even polished manners, could never hope to gain any of these patients.

“And one such family were of more account,”

he said to himself, "both as regarded money and the honour of the thing, than a score of bumpkin farmers and petty tradesmen."

And so he persuaded himself that he was quite content.

But in his heart reigned bitter envy and jealousy, and he never lost an opportunity of maligning his younger rival.

But it happened at last that Andrew Lorimer got a footing in one of these proud and ancient families.

Better would it have been for him had he not done so.

We will relate how it happened in our next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

ANDREW LORIMER VISITS THE COLONEL.

It happened in this wise that Andrew Lorimer obtained patients amongst the great people of the neighbourhood—the county aristocracy

Although, as Doctor Robertson boasted, and not without truth, the young surgeon had no practice amongst the rich and proud county families, it was nevertheless a fact the servants—upper and lower—the retainers, the park-keepers, game-keepers, and so forth preferred the younger son of Esculapius to the pompous and withal expensive Doctor Robertson.

Well, it so fell out that Colonel Featherstonehaugh had a fall from his horse, and, amongst other injuries and bruises, hurt his left ankle badly.

Doctor Robertson was sent for, and doubtless did his best, for the Colonel was not only a wealthy man, but a man of mark and influence, and there were many who would follow his lead.

The Colonel, however, remained in great pain; the injured ankle was terribly inflamed, and even powerful opiates could not procure him sleep.

A day and a night and half a second day passed on, the patient not improving in the slightest degree. His haggard face, bloodshot eyes, and general state of fever told the tale that the prolonged agony, want of sleep, were undermining the very sources of life itself.

It so happened that Doctor Lorimer (for, though really not an M.D., only a plain surgeon, everyone now called him Doctor Lorimer, giving him equal rank with his older rival) was in the house on the afternoon of the second day, having occasion to visit the butler, who was a patient of his.

Miss Diana Featherstonehaugh, who loved her father almost as much as she feared him, could not witness his agony without great misery to herself; and when she heard that the new doctor from Festonhaugh was in the house, she thought struck her that he might do her father good.

For she had heard from her lady's maid, an implicit disciple of Andrew Lorimer, of his curing the blacksmith and making him as good a man as ever, after Doctor Robertson had declared amputation to be absolutely necessary.

"If he could do that," she argued to herself, and not without reason, "why should he not be able to cure papa, or at least ease his pain?"

She was impulsive and prompt to act was this young lady, and at once despatched the above-mentioned lady's maid with a message to the effect that Miss Featherstonehaugh would be glad to see Doctor Lorimer in the drawing-room.

He of course thought that she wished to consult him with respect to her own health, and it would have been strange indeed had he not have felt a thrill of gratified pride.

For this would be his first patient amongst the great families of the neighbourhood; and the ice once broken, what might it not reach to—success, fame, fortune.

And what did it reach to?

Ah! could Andrew Lorimer have divined only a portion of the future, he would have lost his

right hand, had left the neighbourhood for ever, notwithstanding his excellent prospects, rather than have entered that drawing-room at the request of Diana Featherstonehaugh.

She was standing on the hearth-rug, looking in the mirror, when he entered.

And in good truth she had some excuse for looking in the mirror, for she saw there reflected as fair and beautiful a face as that of any damsel in all broad Hampshire.

"Doctor Lorimer, I am glad to see you," said the young lady, running forward to meet him. "I have heard of your—heard of your fame."

"Miss Featherstonehaugh, you flatter me."

They stood face to face these two, and looked in each other's eyes.

There was nothing rude or anything approaching to a stare on his part, but something, she knew not what, caused her to colour up and drop her eyes before the earnest gaze of the young surgeon.

And he, too, turned his look away.

He had seen and was conquered.

The shaft had gone home, and Andrew Lorimer felt an inward feeling which he could not then analyse, that, for weal or woe, he had met his fate.

"What can I have the honour of doing for you, Miss Featherstonehaugh?" asked the young doctor, in calm, cold tones, for he had the rare faculty of instantly recovering his self-possession and commanding his countenance, no matter how much discomposed or affected.

"For me nothing—for my father much, for you can cure him, doctor. Oh! he is in such pain."

"But he is under the care of Doctor Robertson, is he not?"

"Yes, yes," cried the young lady pettishly. "That is just it. Doctor Robertson does not do him a bit of good. Oh! you should see him. It is quite dreadful. The pain and want of sleep are killing him."

Now, Miss Featherstonehaugh knew nothing of the etiquette of the profession, by which one medical man never visits the patient of another unless called into consultation.

"But, Miss Featherstonehaugh, I cannot interfere with Doctor Robertson's patients."

"But my father is in intense pain, and Doctor Robertson has done him no good; and besides, Doctor Robertson is not here, but miles away—at Festonhaugh."

The young surgeon still hesitated. He knew that Doctor Robertson was bitterly hostile to him, jealous of him, and it would, he thought, seem at least to be taking dishonourable advantage thus to supplant him.

And then there occurred to him the risk. Suppose he were to change the treatment and the patient got worse—died.

What a terrible responsibility!

But, as is usually the case, the young lady conquered.

She brought another battery into play, and with good effect too.

"Doctor Lorimer," she said, "do you mean to say, are you cruel enough to tell me, that because my father is Doctor Robertson's patient that you will let him die?"

"Miss Featherstonehaugh, you misunderstand me. In a case of emergency, of a sudden accident,

or in a case of danger, I would act on my own responsibility. But this, as I understand, is not so. Colonel Featherstonehaugh is, perhaps, in great pain, but probably—I have a right to assume as much—Doctor Robertson has taken all proper measures—has done all that medical skill can do. I do not understand that there is any danger, that the Colonel is worse.”

“But he is worse—much worse, and I do believe he will die if you do not see him. Oh, dear! oh, dear!”

And here the young lady brought her last battery into play—a battery which swept away Andrew Lorimer’s defences like chaff, conquered his scruples utterly and instantly.

She wept.

“Then in that case, I will see the patient,” he said abruptly.

“Oh, thank you—thank you! Ten thousand thanks! Come with me at once—this instant,” cried the impatient Diana, seizing his hand.

“Stay one moment. Where is the seat of the pain of which your father complains?”

“The ankle. It is agony. He is too proud and brave to cry out, but you should see his face. Ah! it is terrible! Come in—come at once. In you I place all my hope.”

“Stay! stay a moment, young lady. Tell me what has been Doctor Robertson’s treatment.”

“Oh! I don’t know what was in the medicine he gave him, but it did him no good.”

“But what has been the outward treatment of the swollen ankle, where the great pain is?”

“Cold liniments and lotions, and ice-cold water.”

“Ah!”

"You think that was right?"

"No, I do not," answered the young surgeon, abruptly

"A few more questions—one, two, perhaps three, and then if I can conscientiously do so, I will see the patient."

"Go on, sir," replied Diana, quite humbly, for she felt and knew as women do by quick instinct—intuition, call it what you will—that she was in the presence of a master spirit.

"Has the swelling of the foot subsided at all?"

"A little, I think."

"But not the pain?"

"No, certainly not."

"The Colonel has no power over the foot at all—cannot move it?"

"No."

"Can he not even turn it to the right or left?"

"No; the foot lies all day with the toes pointed inward."

"And what does Doctor Robertson say of the case?"

"He says it is a very bad strain, and that some of the tendons or ligaments are—"

"Just so! You have hot water at command, of course?"

"Oh, yes!"

"It would be as well to have some in readiness—plenty of it, and boiling hot; also flannels."

"Ah! you are about to use hot water instead of cold. You don't agree, then, with Doctor Robertson?"

"What, as to the ligaments and tendons being injured? Oh, yes; I quite agree with him so far."

"But you think there is something worse—something more?"

"I suspect so, but I shall be able to give an opinion when I have seen the patient."

"Come, then, now—this instant."

"I am ready."

The young girl ushered him into the presence of her father.

"Papa, I have brought you a new doctor. He will ease your pain, and cure your foot, I am sure."

"The deuce he will, girl!" said the Colonel. 'I'll give him a hundred guineas to do the first, and procure me a few hours sleep. Who is it?"

"Doctor Lorimer, of Festonhaugh."

"Come forward, sir, and try your skill. There's one consolation, you can't make me much worse."

The young doctor made no reply, but, merely bowing, proceeded to examine the injured ankle.

"It is as I thought," he remarked, after he had carefully looked at it and noticed every point of importance. Then, turning to Diana, who stood by, he said:

"Hot water—boiling water, and plenty of it, with sponges and flannels."

Diana flew to see this attended to at once, leaving the surgeon alone with his new patient.

"What is as you thought?" asked the Colonel. "Speak out man. I'm neither a woman nor a child. I'm not afraid to hear the truth, whatever it may be. Am I going to die?"

"I see nothing whatever to cause any fear on that point."

"Shall I lose my foot or my leg then: or what is it that makes you look so solemn?"

"It is not a pleasant task, Colonel, to take in hand the patient of another medical man, and it

is still more unpleasant when it is necessary to completely reverse the treatment."

"You have discovered something new in the case then—something which Doctor Robertson did not."

"Yes, I think so. Doctor Robertson, I believe, has told you this is a very severe strain or sprain, and has treated it accordingly?"

"Yes. He said, too, that some of the sinews and ligaments were much damaged, perhaps broken: but that was all. And what have you discovered?"

"This: a false joint is already forming, hence the acute pain you suffer. New bone is forming and fixing the ankle stiffly in a wrong place. It would have frozen, so to speak, hard and fast, and the leg and foot would have become virtually all one bone: so that any motion of the joint, any bending, would be utterly impossible."

"And can you obviate that?"

"Yes; I am almost sure I can. I need scarcely ask if you can bear pain; I see by your face that you are suffering intensely, but you neither groan nor cry. Such a patient as you does a surgeon's heart good."

"I hope I shall never do your heart good again, doctor, after this foot."

The hot water and flannels now arrived.

"Bathe the foot and ankle constantly for half an hour with water the hottest the patient can possibly bear," said the surgeon. "Remember Colonel, the hotter the water, the greater the pain from scalding you bear, the easier will be the little operation I shall have to perform."

"Operation! the dickens! Are you going to cut me about with those infernal slashing knives you doctors use?"

"No, there is no necessity for that. I shall hurt you a good deal though, I warn you."

"I will bear it willingly, if it will ease me of future pain."

Andrew Lorimer now asked for the medicine cabinet, and preparing a powerful sleeping draught, he seated himself quietly at the table saying simply :—

"Excuse me, Miss Featherstonehaugh, I shall not attempt to deal with the patient's ankle until it has been constantly bathed with hot water for fully half an hour. I always employ my time while waiting by a patient's bedside for any purpose in study."

And, thereupon, he produced a medical book from his pocket, and was soon, to all appearance, as deeply engaged in its contents as though he had been alone in his own little room at Festonhaugh.

Diana stole a glance at him every now and again—a glance of wonder, curiosity, almost of admiration—and this thought shaped itself into words.

"Is he not handsome?"

Hitherto we have said nothing of the personal appearance of the young surgeon.

The young lady's opinion was fairly justified, for though somewhat slender, and with a slight stoop and pale complexion, Andrew Lorimer was decidedly handsome. His features were perfectly cut after the Grecian model. His forehead was fairly high, but very broad and square. His hair was jet black, and he chose to wear it long, which had a most picturesque effect, forming a dark framework for his pale and clear complexion. His eyes were large and dark, and full of expres-

sion: generally there was a thoughtful melancholy look in them, which well accorded with his features and grave manner.

But there was nothing austere or morose in this gravity. When he smiled, and that was not unfrequently, it seemed like a gentle gleam of sunshine lighting up a landscape over which a soft pleasant summer rain had fallen.

His face betokened his nature—an earnest, tender-hearted, noble-minded man, and a gentleman, a Christian gentleman, every inch of him.

Such was Andrew Lorimer.

It is no wonder that Diana Featherstonehaugh regarded him with curiosity and interest. She had not only never seen his like before, but no one in the least degree approaching him in manner and appearance.

He was always carefully dressed in the same fashion—a black coat fitting well to his figure with waistcoat to match. Around his neck he wore a laced muslin cravat of spotless purity, while his well-shaped lower limbs were encased in breeches and Hessian boots.

As regarded attire the young surgeon, though plainly dressed, was in this very plainness and perfect neatness a bit of a dandy.

When half an hour had passed, the young surgeon looked at his watch, and carefully marking the place in his book where he had left off, he put it in his pocket, rose, and quietly walked to the sofa at the other end of the room on which the Colonel lay, his daughter sitting by his side, while two women-servants constantly bathed the injured foot with hot water.

“That will do with the hot water,” said Lorimer calmly. “You women can go, and you

too, Miss Featherstonehaugh, had, perhaps, better retire. I am going to put your father to some pain, of short duration but severe until it is over."

"I am ready, doctor. I feel now certain, yours is the right treatment. I am still in pain but there is a different feeling about the ankle: it seems looser."

"That is as it should be. I shall be able to replace the bones without much trouble."

"I would rather remain. I may, perhaps, be of service," replied Diana.

"As you please."

In spite of her word, the young girl turned pale as the surgeon deliberately took his coat off, and prepared to operate on his patient.

"The devil!" exclaimed the Colonel. "You take your coat off to it! Is it likely to be a hard tug then?"

"You see, sir, I like to be disencumbered, to have my arms and hands at perfect liberty, and I must tell you that it may be, as you say, a hard tug; for a false joint has begun to form, a bone in the wrong place, and I must break this morbid deposit before I can put your ankle right."

"Pleasant, certainly," said the Colonel, with a grim smile. "However, sir, go ahead, do your best or your worst, don't spare me. I'll warrant, whatever you do, you don't make me cry out. Di, girl, bring me a leaden bullet."

"A bullet," cried Diana, to whom the word brought to mind her father's terrible reputation as a deadly duellist.

"Yes, girl. Don't you know that soldiers and sailors, when they are tied up to the triangles or gratings to receive a flogging, always hold a

bullet between their teeth to bite when the sharp agony comes? They fancy it eases the pain. Perhaps it does. At all events, it prevents them crying out."

The young surgeon soon made his preparations.

"Now, sir, are you ready?"

"Quite ready."

Diana turned away her face, and grew deadly pale.

In a few seconds the young surgeon stood beside her.

"It is done!" he said quietly. "Give your father some strong spirit. He is a little faint from the pain: but the ankle is in its right place, and he will, I think, be well in a week."

"Ah!" said the Colonel with a deep sigh of relief, "it was sharp while it lasted; but I feel, I know, it is all right now."

"Here is a composing draught. Take it when you like. Good afternoon to you, Colonel; good afternoon, Miss Featherstonehaugh. I have other patients to visit and am late. Excuse me."

And without waiting for thanks or fee, the young surgeon hurriedly departed.

"Diana," said the Colonel, "that is a fine fellow; no pomposity, pretence or tinsel about him. He is a sterling *man*."

Diana thought so also, but said nothing.

CHAPTER IV

ANDREW LORIMER'S GUEST.

ANDREW LORIMER neither saw nor heard any more of the Featherstonehaughs for some days, but he felt perfectly certain that the patient was progressing favourably, and that his treatment had proved successful.

The black looks of Doctor Robertson, and the exaggerated manner in which he affected to treat his rival, passing him in the street with head up, not deigning a glance, to say nothing of a bow, were quite sufficient to convince the young surgeon that the elder practitioner knew all about the affair, and that the patient was going on well.

A week passed by, when, one afternoon, just as Lorimer had returned from a long round, a lady on horseback, followed by a man-servant, pulled up at the gate in the white palings of Lorimer's house.

The lady dismounted, and holding up her riding habit, came along the little gravel path, and up to the front door.

Lorimer opened it before she could knock or ring, and found himself face to face with Miss Diana Featherstonehaugh.

"Pray, walk in, Miss Featherstonehaugh," said the young man, with quiet ease, though his heart beat faster, and he was conscious that he coloured up. "No bad news from the Haugh, I hope. I

trust you have not come to summon me in my professional capacity ? ”

“ No, indeed, Doctor Lorimer. No bad news ; nothing but good news. My father, the Colonel, is up and about, and though his ankle is still weak and tender, he can walk easily with the aid of a stick.”

“ Ah ! I thought so.”

“ He is profuse in his expressions of gratitude, as, indeed, he ought to be.”

“ And Doctor Robertson,” asked Lorimer, with some curiosity, “ what did he say of the case ? ”

“ Oh ! ” replied Diana, laughing, “ he was in a dreadful rage ; declared that he knew all along that the ankle was dislocated, but did not tell the Colonel so, in order not to frighten him. The idea of frightening Colonel Featherstonehaugh ! Was anything ever so absurd ? He said, too, that he would have effected by gradual and gentle means what you did by violence. However, he went on to say, that it was a most presumptuous and unprofessional proceeding on your part, and that, should anything happen, you must take the responsibility ”

“ I am quite willing to take the responsibility,” replied the young surgeon, quietly ; “ and as to my acting unprofessionally in interfering with his case, I really had no choice. I could not stand by and see your father suffering intense pain. I could not, knowing, as I did that a false joint was forming, and that he would be a cripple for life without prompt and skilful treatment, refuse to render any assistance which was in my power to ease his pain and cure his ankle at the cost of only a few brief seconds of sharp agony.”

“ Of course you could not. You would have

been inhuman, indeed, had you done so, and that, I am sure, you are not. On my behalf, doctor," said the young lady, looking him full in the face with her soft blue eyes, "accept my deep gratitude—a daughter's gratitude—for the great service rendered to my father."

"You are too good, Miss Featherstonehaugh."

They were standing on the threshold of the young surgeon's humble abode while this conversation took place.

Diana seemed embarrassed, as though she had something to say, and yet knew not how to do it.

He noticed this, and, after a moment's hesitation, for he feared he might do wrong—a single man inviting a young lady into his humble domicile—said:

"Perhaps you are tired, Miss Featherstonehaugh. If you will accept my humble hospitality for a short time, I will send my man to take your horse and that of your servant to the stable."

"Thank you, doctor; you are very kind. I will accept your invitation, as I am just a little tired, and also I have something to say to you."

Andrew Lorimer deferentially conducted her into his little sitting-room and parlour. It was small, and though plainly furnished, was clean and comfortable.

A bright fire burned on the hearth, and an oil lamp gave ample light.

The table was laid with the tea equipage, the urn hissing and smoking.

The young lady glanced around her, and thought to herself: "This country surgeon, though poor and unknown, is evidently a man of refinement."

There was a book cabinet at one end of the room, well stocked, and on the walls hung several small oil paintings of rare excellence.

There was nothing common, or tawdry, or vulgar, to be seen.

"I am about taking a cup of Bohea, Miss Featherstonehaugh. I can recommend the quality. I receive a chest every year direct from China, where I have a relation, a merchant."

In those days good tea was a rarity, an expensive luxury, only to be had by the wealthy, and not always even by them.

A guinea a pound was no unusual price for the best tea.

Miss Featherstonehaugh graciously accepted the invitation, and Doctor Lorimer rang for the old woman who attended to his household work, and who seemed very much astonished at the sight of a young, lovely, and evidently high-born damsel, comfortably seated in one of the large old-fashioned square-armed easy-chairs which flanked the mantelpiece.

As for Andrew Lorimer, he was in a measure pleased and flattered at the visit of his fair guest, and yet felt restless and uneasy.

He could not keep his eyes off her face, nor when he turned away could he banish her from his thoughts for one single moment.

The Bohea was made, and Lorimer himself doing the honours, poured out a dish for his guest, who declared she had never tasted any like it at the Haugh.

"I hope we may see you there again soon," she said, "and then you shall judge for yourself. I will do my best, but I am sure I cannot set before you such a dish of tea as you have given me."

"I trust it may be long before I have to visit the Haugh," he said.

"And why?" she asked, lifting her eyebrows.

"Surely even a doctor may be allowed to wish that his services may not be required," he replied.

"That is true, sir; but I spoke of your visiting the Haugh as a friend, not in your professional capacity."

He could not but feel flattered at this invitation, coming from such lips, but replied calmly,

"Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said, "I am sensible of the honour you have done me in giving me an invitation as a guest, but for me to visit your or any of the great families as such would be quite out of place. I am a young man, a poor man, one who has his way to make—his way in the world," he went on, warming to enthusiasm as he spoke, his cheek flushing, his dark eyes flashing. "I feel that I have within me the elements of success. I will conquer fate to my will. I am on the eve of great discoveries in medicine and surgery. I shall yet be famous. But it is, and must be, a work of time and labour, and I repeat it would ill become me, a struggling surgeon, to visit at the houses of great people like your father, the Colonel."

"Then you refuse to come?"

"Yes, Miss Featherstonehaugh, unless summoned professionally."

A happy thought darted across Diana's mind.

She was a girl who did not like to be thwarted in anything; and for an invitation from her, sanctioned by her father, to be refused, that was something quite new; and though she could not help admiring the independence of Andrew Lorimer, her pride felt a little hurt.

She determined that he should come to taste her Bohea, and hit upon a plan by which she could accomplish her end.

However, she said nothing, but sipped her tea in silence, as though she were hurt and offended at his refusal.

His heart smote him as he looked on the fair young creature opposite him, sitting with down-cast eyes and melancholy expression of countenance.

"It was rude of me to refuse ; perhaps I ought not to have done so, but it cannot be helped now. It is impossible for me to bring up the subject again," he thought.

The young lady remained persistently silent, and to him the situation grew very embarrassing. So, to break the painful monotony of this silence, he remarked :

"I think you said, Miss Featherstonehaugh, that there was something you wished to say to me, or perhaps I misunderstood your meaning?"

"Not at all. It is on my father's behalf. I must again convey to you verbally his thanks, and I have a letter to give you from him, and a—a—packet."

He raised his eyebrows in slight wonder, and she handed him a letter, addressed in a large bold hand, to Doctor Andrew Lorimer.

"DOCTOR LORIMER,

"I have sent my daughter to you to convey my thanks for the great service you rendered me, for the skill with which you at once corrected the error of that pompous old fool, Doctor Robertson, and cured my ankle, saving me from a life-long lameness.

"The Featherstonehaughs have never been ungrateful or forgetful of their promises, and I am not the man to commence such a course. Nothing that I can do, say, or give, will adequately requite you for the service you have rendered me. I have charged my daughter with a packet, which, I trust, will prove that I am not ungrateful, and do not forget a promise.

"HECTOR FEATHERSTONEHAUGH."

Andrew Lorimer read it slowly through, and then, lifting his eyes to the young girl's face, said quickly :

"Your father speaks of a packet, Miss Featherstonehaugh."

She produced one, and handed it to him in a shy, diffident manner, as though she feared she were committing some offence.

She knew the contents of the packet, and had a sort of suspicion as to the manner in which the young surgeon would receive it.

He was not, however, as she feared, almost expected, offended ; but after perusing it, and carefully looking over the contents, said calmly :

"Here are bank notes for one thousand pounds."

She bowed her head in silence.

A quiet, grave sort of smile was on his face as he replied :

"Truly, a magnificent fee for setting a sprained ankle right. I should soon attain wealth, at all events, at that rate."

"You will not refuse it ?"

"Pardon me, Miss Featherstonehaugh, I must refuse it—do refuse it ; indeed, under the circumstances, I can accept no fee whatever, for it was not my case, but that of Doctor Robertson."

"I don't think Doctor Robertson would refuse a thousand pounds," said Diana, sharply, who, though she admired Lorimer's conduct, felt as though she were in a measure slighted through his refusal of her father's gift.

"Possibly not; but he is James Robertson, and I am Andrew Lorimer, which makes all the difference."

This he said with a calm self-confidence, as much as to intimate that he was beyond all suspicion of greed or worldly-mindedness—that he, Andrew Lorimer, was utterly incapable of being swayed by mercenary motives.

Though he spoke so quietly, and without any boast or ostentation, yet she thought that very calmness and quiet contempt of money had something almost insolent in its nature.

"Who is he, to set himself above everybody else in this high and mighty fashion? I begin to *hate him*—this cold, proud, upstart surgeon."

He handed her back the notes with the same grave smile on his face.

"Tell your father, the Colonel," he said quietly, "that, though a poor man, I am also a proud man, that I am sure he intended no offence, and so, on my part, I will not take offence. I am sure he will not again offer me more than is my due."

"And what is your due—what is your fee, sir, on this occasion? I must insist on paying you that, at all events."

With the words she produced her purse, and took forth several guineas.

Andrew Lorimer coloured up slightly, and a gleam came into his eye.

He was angry, and not without reason.

For, to say the least, it was injudicious on her

part, after he had refused a thousand pounds from her father, to offer him a fee.

"Thank you, Miss Featherstonehaugh. I have no claim on your father, certainly not on *you*," and he emphasized the word. "Perhaps if you will take the trouble to go down to Doctor Robertson's house he will accept the fee. As for me, I was only there by accident—a fortunate accident, for I am always happy to alleviate suffering, to do good, be it in the case of prince or peasant, rich or poor."

He spoke a little sternly, as though to let her understand that it was no consideration of her father's rank and position which caused him to undertake his cure.

She felt it, and winced under his quiet, somewhat ironical manner.

"Thank you, Doctor Lorimer," she said, rising and curtsying. "You wish me to understand that you would as readily have attended a peasant hind who had hurt his ankle as my father, Colonel Featherstonehaugh?"

"Exactly, Miss Featherstonehaugh. It was precisely that which I wished you to understand."

She looked at him with mingled anger, annoyance, and surprise.

Such language, so quietly and calmly spoken, was quite new to her.

And coming from an obscure country surgeon it was inconceivable—preposterous.

"The man must be mad!" she said to herself.

"I must be leaving now," she said a little coldly and a little sharply; "I thank you for your hospitality."

Andrew Lorimer bowed, and said, in the same quiet and unconcerned manner :

"Let me beg of you to be seated for a few moments, while I order the horses of yourself and servant."

Then he went out by the back way, leaving her alone with her thoughts—not of a very amiable nature at that moment.

"I hate him, this insolent doctor!" she said to herself, stamping her little foot on the ground, "with handsome face and calm, collected manner, as if he were actually superior to us, the Featherstonehaughs of the Haugh! Was there ever such insolence! The idea of his refusing an invitation which every other doctor within a hundred miles would be only too glad to accept! Yes, I hate him! I hate him—"

He returned as she ejaculated these last amiable words, and there was the same quiet smile on his face.

"I wonder if he heard me?" she said to herself. "No matter; I don't care if he did."

"Miss Featherstonehaugh, your horse is at the gate."

"Thank you; good evening," she said coldly, and, gathering the skirt of her habit around her, walked out, without even shaking hands with her host.

Notwithstanding this, he accompanied her to the gate, and, when she was seated in the saddle, took off his hat, bowed, and said :

"Good evening, Miss Featherstonehaugh; a pleasant ride."

She slightly bent her head—very, very slightly—in acknowledgment, then whipped up her horse and rode off at a canter.

But it was by no means a pleasant ride on her part from Festonhaugh to her father's house.

The image of the young doctor, with his pale, handsome face, earnest eyes, and grave smile, haunted her.

"I hate him! I hate him!" she said again and again.

And at last this ejaculation broke from her lips as she urged her horse into a gallop:

"Yes, I hate him, but I will be revenged. I will—I will make him love me."

Did she indeed hate him?

It would have been hard for her to have accurately read her own heart then.

And did she mean it when she cried, "I will make him love me?"

She did mean it, but too well for her happiness and his.

And she succeeded. She made him love her.

Whether for weal or woe, the sequel will tell.

CHAPTER V

A MESSAGE FROM THE HAUGH.

HITHERTO we have said little of Diana Featherstonehaugh, except that she was beautiful.

Motherless from an early age, she had been petted in her infancy and youth by a fond father, who, though stern, even cruel, in his dealings with men, was always tender and loving with her.

Diana was the apple of the fierce Colonel's eye, could do with him as she pleased, and could herself do absolutely what she pleased.

And yet, though her father's anger had never been visited upon her, she feared him. She saw the terror he was held in by all, and of course the story of the many deadly duels he had fought, in nearly all cases fatal to his antagonist, reached her ears.

She thought to herself that though so gentle and loving with her, his anger, if roused, would be terrible.

As she grew from childhood to maidenhood, he procured for her the best masters, but on her liberty placed no control whatever.

On her seventeenth birthday he spoke to her seriously on a serious subject, and she knew that he was terribly in earnest.

"My daughter, you are now of a marriageable age. I trust that no daughter of our house would ever make an unworthy choice of a husband—

would ever allow her affections to rest on one beneath her, or one in any way unworthy of her hand. They say I am a stern man; it may be so. In this matter I should be relentless—inflexible. Should such a calamity happen as that you, my only child, should wed one beneath you, unworthy of you, or an enemy of mine, my vengeance would seek out the man, and I would slay him, though he had a hundred lives. No one would ever dare address a daughter of the house of Featherstonehaugh with dishonourable intentions, I hope and believe; but should ever the breath of scandal or the faintest suspicion ever be brought on your fair fame by mortal man, his heart's blood shall wipe out the stain. By my sword, or a bullet from my pistol, that man dies, though he were heir to the throne of England! I swear it, by the memory of my mother, by the honour of my family! So, my daughter, beware! You know by report what manner of man your father is."

She did know, and though she never dreamed of transgressing, or doing aught against his wishes, she nevertheless shuddered as she listened to this stern admonition, delivered calmly and in a manner which convinced her that, should occasion arise, Colonel Featherstonehaugh would do all—ay, even more than he said.

He never alluded to the subject again; but this brief warning sunk deep into her mind.

At the time when our story opens, Diana Featherstonehaugh was just eighteen years of age, and as lovely a girl as one could wish to see.

Rather tall for a female, exquisitely shaped, with a figure lithe and graceful as one of the

nymphs of her name-sake, 'Diana, the huntress,' the heiress of Featherstonehaugh, was celebrated as the handsomest girl in Hampshire.

Her complexion was dazzlingly fair, her hair a light golden hue, her eyes large and blue, at times soft and languishing in expression, at others, when pleased or excited, sparkling and full of fire.

In manner she was wonderfully fascinating, attracting even by her faults as do children.

Pettish quick-tempered, she was generous and impulsive to a fault.

Ever changing in manner and mood, she was like some bright fairy, now assuming one shape, now another.

A will-o'-the-wisp, which no mortal could secure and make a prisoner.

A lovely type of early spring, sunshine, and flowers—mingled with showers of rain and cold wind.

All who came within her sphere felt the fascination she exercised.

None could tame her—not one of the many wealthy, even noble suitors she had seen at her father's house could boast of being able to touch her heart in the slightest degree.

She was mirthful or melancholy, was sparkling and charming, or petulant and ill-tempered, just as the humour took her.

But to none did she evince the least evidence of deep feeling, that she had anything in her nature beyond superficial gaiety or ill-humour as the case might be, each to pass away in turns and give place to the other like April sunshine and April showers.

She was accomplished, of course, and moreover

intelligent, even witty, when she chose ; and in every respect was a dangerous siren, and one to be avoided by any young gentleman who did not wish to lose his heart, or, prepared to lose it, could not storm in turn the citadel to which he had surrendered.

Such was the charming demoiselle of eighteen, who declared to herself that she hated Andrew Lorimer, and would make him love her.

Such the beautiful butterfly to whom it was destined the grave, hard-working, young surgeon should lose his heart, and whose bumble slave he would be but too willing to become.

And now we will get on with our story.

It is an old and incontrovertible saying that it takes two persons at least for any game.

And at this particular game at which Miss Featherstonehaugh determined she would play and win—namely, making Andrew Lorimer fall in love with her—it was also possible that even, in winning his love, she might lose—that is to say, win his and lose her own heart.

A most dangerous game for a young lady to play, unless quite sure of herself—certain that she is invulnerable to love shafts.

A few days passed, and Andrew Lorimer saw nothing of Colonel Featherstonehaugh or his daughter.

The young surgeon began to flatter himself that he had banished her too charming image from his heart, and that her bright eyes and winning manners had only scratched him, not inflicted a deep wound.

A week rolled on, and labouring assiduously at his studies and profession, Andrew Lorimer had actually succeeded in weaning his thoughts from

the bright vision of beauty which had come like a stream of sunshine across his path.

There was, however, a change in him, perceptible only to a very acute observer.

He was grave and, perhaps, sadder than of yore, but nevertheless he could always summon a smile for a poor patient, and speak a cheerful word of hope to such as needed encouragement.

A week exactly from the date of Diana Featherstonehaugh's visit, a mounted groom galloped up to the garden gate of the doctor's house.

The doctor had just come in from a long ride, and was about to take a fragrant cup of Bohea, for he loved good tea and tobacco.

"The cup which cheers but not inebriates" and his pipe were about the only luxuries he allowed himself.

Andrew Lorimer's heart beat faster as, opening the door, he walked along the gravel path across the neatly kept, little front garden to the gate.

For he recognised the livery of Colonel Featherstonehaugh, and guessed instantly that the man was the bearer of a message to him to come over to the Haugh.

Nor was he mistaken in this. He was to come over at once; and if his own horses had been out and were tired, he was requested to mount the groom's.

This looked like something serious, and the surgeon asked:

"Who is ill at the Haugh?"

"I don't know, sir. The butler brought me the message, and told me to saddle the best horse in the stable."

Andrew Lorimer remained buried in thought for a brief space.

Should he go—venture within the sphere of the dangerous siren whose seductive glances had already wounded him?

Prudence whispered to him, "Do not go; but hand over the case to Dr. Robertson, excusing yourself on the ground of a pressing engagement."

His inclination whispered to him, "Go, and rely on your strength of mind. It's only cowards who flee from danger; brave men should meet it and conquer."

"And, besides," he argued, "how can I refuse to go? Some one of the household requires my professional services. By refusing to go, I may be morally responsible for the death of a fellow creature. I must go. It would be cruel, almost dishonourable, not to go. Were it the case of a peasant, I should not hesitate for a moment. Why should I, then, because the summons comes from Colonel Featherstonehaugh?"

The result of Andrew Lorimer's inward deliberations was, that he determined to go.

"You can ride back and say I shall be there shortly after you. I have a fast horse fresh in the stable."

The groom galloped off, and the young doctor ordered the boy to saddle the horse and bring him round at once.

In less than ten minutes Lorimer was on the road to the Haugh.

For a mile or so he rode at a hard canter, almost a gallop; but as he approached his destination he slackened his speed, and presently drew rein and brought the horse to a walk.

A vague feeling, not to be described, and for

which he himself could not account, seemed to pull him back.

It was as though an invisible rope, acting on his heart, restrained his progress.

But after a bit he shook off the feeling, and flattered himself he had conquered a foolish childish weakness.

"Bah! coward that I am! What have I to fear?" he said to himself. "I go now as a surgeon, not a man. If it is she who is ill, I shall regard her not as a woman and a lovely one, but purely as a patient."

Then he put spurs to his horse, and galloped all the remainder of the way to the mansion of Colonel Featherstonehaugh.

His arrival was expected, for there was a groom waiting on the steps to take his horse.

When he dismounted, he was immediately conducted to the drawing-room, and there he found Miss Featherstonehaugh.

She rose to meet him instantly.

"Ah! this is indeed kind of you, Doctor Lorimer, to come so promptly," she said, giving him her hand.

A quick glance was sufficient to tell him that she was not ailing, and could not require his professional services.

"I trust your father, the Colonel, is not seriously ill," he said, resolved to make it a purely business interview if possible.

"It is not my father, Doctor Lorimer," she replied; "he has gone to London, and I am not to join him until next week. He has an ambition that I should be a great lady at court. For my part, I hate the thought of it; but you know his will is and must be law to me."

"I hope, then, it is not yourself. But no—it requires no surgeon to tell that you are well."

"No, doctor, it is not myself, but a gentleman who has had an accident."

"A gentleman—a friend, I presume."

"No; were my father here, he would say an enemy."

"And where is the gentleman?"

"I have made him as comfortable as I can on a sofa in the breakfast-room. Will you come and see him?"

"Certainly. To ease pain and assist nature in her efforts to cure is my profession. But I must remark that, to me, you speak in riddles. An enemy, you say, this gentleman is who has met with an accident, and, yet, he is in your father's house?"

"I said my father would consider him an enemy. His name is Valentine Montaigne. Perhaps you have heard of the bitter feud which has for generations existed between the Montaignes and the Featherstonehaughs? If so, you can understand."

"Valentine Montaigne," said the doctor. "I do not know him; but I am well aware of the enmity which your father, the Colonel, bears towards that family. Let me see him. I would advise his being removed at once, if it is safe. Your father is a man of violent passion."

"And he may return to-night," said the young lady with a frightened look. "Surely, sir, you do not think he would be violent to an injured man?"

"I hope not. But from what I have heard, I do not think it right or safe that Valentine Montaigne should be in this house."

"What have you heard?"

"No matter. Doctors and priests are often the repositories of strange secrets. Do you know Valentine Montaigne?"

"I never saw him till to-day. Do you know him?"

"I do not. But if you will show me to the room, I will speedily make his acquaintance, in my professional capacity of course."

"A few minutes, doctor. Let me tell you first under what circumstances I saw him and brought him here."

"I am all attention. But the patient—delay may, perhaps, be dangerous."

"I will not detain you two minutes. Besides, it would be as well if you knew the nature of the accident."

Andrew Lorimer bowed, and the young lady proceeded to tell her tale.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW PATIENT.

"MY story is a very short one, doctor," she said. "This afternoon I went out for a drive in the pony-chaise. I had not gone far from the park gates when a riderless horse came galloping along the road and dashed past, nearly running into the pony-carriage. I guessed, of course, that some gentleman had received a fall, and drove on, looking carefully on the road and on the fields on either side. Presently, I saw what I feared and expected, a gentleman lying motionless by the roadside, his head and shoulders on a gravel heap. I stopped the ponies, alighted, and found that the gentleman was just recovering from insensibility. He was evidently badly hurt, but in a few minutes, with my assistance, he was able to get into the chaise. He was evidently in great pain, as pale as death, and was ready to faint. However, I drove him here, and made him as comfortable as I could in the breakfast-room, and instantly sent off to you. There, doctor, that is all. Were he ten times a family enemy, as my father thinks him, I could not have left him to die like a dog by the roadside. Nor do I even think my father would have done so, notwithstanding his temper and unforgiving nature."

"I am at your service, Miss Featherstonehaugh," replied the doctor briefly; "lead me to the patient."

She took him to the breakfast-room, where lay Valentine Montainge, pale and obviously in pain.

Diana retired, and the surgeon proceeded to examine the injured man.

In a quarter of an hour's time he had done all that could be done, and administered a powerful restorative.

Then he went to Miss Featherstonehaugh, who was in the drawing-room.

"Is the gentleman much hurt, doctor?" she asked, coming to meet him.

"Very much so; the left collar bone and three ribs are broken, the shoulder is strained, and the left lung is lacerated. He will require constant attention for three days. Hæmorrhage from the lung may set in at any moment to such an extent as to cause suffocation, and if there is not a medical man at hand he would die."

"What is to be done, doctor?" asked the young lady in great tribulation and perplexity.

"Is he in immediate danger?"

"I think he will recover with skilful and incessant attention."

"He cannot be in better hands than yours, I feel sure, Doctor Lorimer."

"Thank you, for your good opinion."

"You will not leave him yet, I trust; you will see him over the worst."

"I am in great perplexity; I scarcely know how to act. I do not like to leave him; he would probably die in the night. He is not fit to be moved certainly for twelve hours, until nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep, has visited him, and until a reaction from the effects of the shock has set in."

"But you will stay to-night, will you not, doctor? You will not be so cruel as to leave me here—my father absent—with a dying man?"

"No, I will remain to-night. He will require constant watching and attention. But it is necessary a messenger be sent to Festonhaugh to carry a note from me to the old woman who keeps my house, so that my other patients may know where I am, and where to send in a case of emergency."

"I will despatch a man on horseback at once."

"Thanks," said Lorimer, "I will write a note. He will also be able to bring back with him some bandages, medicines, and other appliances. Also some books for me."

"Books!" said Diana, somewhat puzzled.

"Yes, Miss Featherstonehaugh. I shall sit up all night, so as to be ready to attend to the wounded man instantly if needed; and I make it a rule not to waste any portion of time. When I am not otherwise engaged I study."

"But I thought, doctor," she said in some surprise, "that you had studied—that you had mastered your profession."

"Young lady," said the surgeon with a gentle smile, "ours is a profession which is never mastered; there is always something more to learn. And though I were thoroughly acquainted with the properties of every drug, knew exactly the proper treatment for every ailment and disease—in fact, knew more than all the physicians in the world, from the time of Galen and Hippocrat, there would be yet more to learn."

"What more, doctor?" asked Diana, interested and impressed by his enthusiasm for his science.

"What more? The great secret!"

"The great secret?" repeated Diana as the young doctor uttered the impressive words.

"Yes, the secret of life and death. Why does old age and decay come on? What is the cause of the failure of that vital energy, the life-giving spirit-essence—call it what you will—which causes the human body to repair itself in youth and the prime of life. Why does the frame wither? Why do the eyes grow dim, the hearing dull, the joints stiff? Why does the strength fail, spite of the most nutritious food and strongest stimulants? What is the cause of all this? Where is the failure? When is that to be discovered? Perhaps not in my days, nor in yours, young lady; but the time will come when it shall be in the power of physicians to infuse fresh energy and vitality, to send the rich blood bounding through the veins as in youth. In fact, to prolong life perhaps indefinitely, to wind up the human clock, which has run down. Yes, it is the secret of life and death I seek. Then, and not till then, I shall consider I have mastered the science of surgery and medicine."

She looked at him, and a strange expression of mingled admiration, wonder, respect, with just a little smile on her face.

She made no reply, but opening her desk, which was on a little side-table, said:

"There are writing materials, Doctor Lorimer. I will go and order a man on horseback to be in readiness, and at your disposal."

He bowed his head, and seating himself, proceeded to write a note, containing necessary directions.

Diana had just given the order, when there

rode up to the hall a young lady, whom Diana instantly ran out to and greeted warmly.

"Dear Isabel, I am so glad you have come. Something has happened — an accident to a gentleman. But here is the groom to take your horse. Come in, and I will tell you all about it."

Accordingly, Miss Isabel Vanstone, Diana's dearest friend—indeed, almost the only one her father, the proud colonel, would allow to visit her—instantly springing lightly from the saddle, and gathering up the skirt of her riding habit, ran up the step and entered the hall.

Diana at once conducted her friend to her pretty little sanctum (dressing-room and boudoir in one), where they proceeded to pour forth confidences to each other, as young ladies who are friends will.

Isabel Vanstone was an orphan, an heiress, and a ward in Chancery.

She lived with an old aunt at a charming little cottage on the banks of the river, fully fifteen miles from Featherstonehaugh Hall.

And yet she was a frequent visitor to Diana, riding the fifteen miles on her little thoroughbred horse, and back frequently on the same day.

At other times Diana would prevail on her to make a stay of a few days, a week, and more than once she remained a fortnight.

On these occasions Diana would send over a message to Melrose Cottage to inform the old lady of her niece's intended stay, and bring back such articles of attire, &c., as the young lady might require.

Isabel Vanstone was as different in most things from Diana Featherstonehaugh as it is possible for one girl to be from another.

She was beautiful, though of quite another style of beauty.

Diana was brilliantly fair, with flashing blue eyes, a profusion of bright golden hair, vivacious, quick-tempered, wayward, high-spirited, excitable, ever carried away by the force of circumstances and her own impulsive nature combined.

Isabel was lovely. Hers was that soft, tender, languishing style of beauty not often seen in England.

In stature, she was smaller than Diana—her form delicately and elegantly moulded, not so statuesquely beautiful as Diana's.

Her complexion was clear and pure, her soft, silken hair a deep, rich brown, her eyes hazel, her features regular and delicate.

No one could deny that she was a beautiful girl. The tender, gentle, almost timid, expression over her face enhanced the charms of features, form, and complexion.

Her face rightly expressed her nature.

She was gentle and timid as a fawn usually, but she was not wanting in spirit on occasions, especially on behalf of a friend in danger or assailed in any way.

She was not passionately devoted to the chase, never ventured to carry a firearm, and would have shuddered at the thought of discharging one.

Whereas Diana often went out into the forest or her father's preserves, on horseback, and with a light piece—a sort of carbine, expressly made for her—slung over her shoulder, would seek such sport as the vast woods afforded.

Hares, rabbits, and pheasants fell frequent victims to her skill and love of sport, and not

unfrequently she would bring down a deer with a bullet from the barrel of her little double-barrelled fowling-piece.

But though Isabel shunned these more exciting and vigorous sports in which Diana delighted, she was a good horsewoman, and would often ride a few miles after the fox-hounds, although, again, unlike her friend, she would not strive to be in at the death.

Strange to say, the fierce, proud, obstinate, and over-bearing Colonel Featherstonehaugh took quite a fancy to gentle Isabel Vanstone, and she was always welcome at the Haugh.

This was a great delight and consolation to Diana, who found in her loving, tender, young friend a soothing relief from her more active pleasures and employments.

The young ladies went up together to Diana's boudoir, and thither we will follow them and listen to their conversation.

CHAPTER VII.

BEHIND THE SCREEN—ISABEL'S DEFENCE OF
ANDREW LORIMER.

BEFORE, however, taking her friend to her own little room, Diana led her to the door of the one where Valentine Montaigne lay on a sofa.

It was common then to have screens before the door inside the room so as to obviate draughts.

Opening the door quietly, Diana drew Isabel softly after her and then bade her look through a small rent in the screen.

Isabel did so, started, and almost gave vent to a little cry.

Diana, however, placed her hand to her lips, and taking her hand as before, led her away closing the door behind her.

Neither said a word until they were in the privacy of Diana's boudoir.

Then Isabel spoke—"Gracious heavens, Diana! can I be mistaken? Who was that I saw lying on the sofa?"

"Did you not recognise him?"

"Yes—at least I fancied I did; but on consideration it is too impossible."

"For whom did you take the gentleman you saw?"

"For Valentine Montaigne, at first. But I must have been mistaken."

Diana replied quietly—"It was Valentine Montaigne, and no one else."

"Oh, Diana!" exclaimed Isabel, clasping her friends hand in both her own, "what madness is this? You know the Colonel's inveterate, bitter hatred against the Montaigne family? you know, too, his terrible temper and disposition?"

"Yes, I know all that," Diana replied; "but my father is away in London."

"But he may return at any moment, and then think of the dreadful consequences. There would be bloodshed there and then. They both wear swords, and Colonel Featherstonehaugh would force Valentine to fight. The floors of Featherstonehaugh Hall would be stained with the blood of one or both of them within a few minutes of the time when your father discovered Valentine Montaigne beneath his roof."

"But he will not discover him; and besides it cannot be helped if he does. Under the circumstances I don't think he would wish to kill him. It was not Valentine's fault. He could not help it."

"Under the circumstances!" exclaimed Isabel. "Not Valentine's fault! He could not help it! Really I cannot understand you, Diana."

"I will explain to you, and you will, I think, agree with me, that I could not act otherwise than I did. I was driving out in the pony-carriage, when about half a mile from the lodge gates there came tearing along the road a runaway horse. I at once feared that an accident had occurred, and my fears were too well founded. A little further on I found the rider of the horse—Valentine Montaigne—insensible, seriously hurt. With some difficulty I got him into the little carriage, drove him to the Hall, and at once sent for Doctor Lorimer, the young surgeon of whom

everyone speaks so highly, and who, you know, cured my father's ankle when the other doctor would have caused him to lose his foot."

"Doctor Lorimer!" cried Isabel; "and has he come?"

"He is here now. I have just despatched a mounted messenger to his house for medicines and other things."

"And what does Doctor Lorimer think of the case?"

"He says it is very serious, that the wounded man must be watched night and day, and attended with the utmost care and skill."

"But he will recover?"

"He thinks and hopes so, and is himself going to remain here and sit up all night with the patient. Is it not kind of him?"

"He is a kind-hearted, noble-minded man, Diana—the best and purest, and most sincere Christian gentleman I have ever met or even heard of. The poor people worship him almost as though he were a saint."

"He is more than what you say, Isabel," replied Diana earnestly; "he is a wonderful man. Standing before him, with his grave earnest eyes fixed on my face, I feel as though I were in the presence of superior nature—of a being with loftier thoughts and aspirations, of a stronger mind and purer spirit—one before which my weak will must perforce bow. And yet you know, Isabel," she continued, speaking fast and a bright flush tinged her fair cheek, "I feel a sort of annoyance, almost of anger, when I see him and he talks to me."

"Annoyance, anger! I am sure Andrew Lorimer would never say anything which could, by any possibility, give offence."

"No, that is not it, Isabel," Diana replied pettishly. "It is not what he says, but what he does not say annoys me. He behaves with the most supremely calm indifference, and talks to me in a kind patronizing way, just as he might to one of his old women patients, whom he attends for nothing they tell me."

"Very kind of him, I am sure," said Isabel quietly.

"Yes—yes—very kind of him, no doubt; but I am not a poor old woman, and for anything he may do for my father he will be well paid. And he talks on learned matters—of his ambitious dreams—of his hope of discovering the great secret, as he calls it—the secret of life and death."

"I am sure, Diana, you ought to feel honoured at Doctor Lorimer speaking to you on such subjects: he thereby pays a compliment to your intellect. I am quite sure he spoke well, and that you listened with interest."

"Yes, that is just it. Despite myself I was carried away by his eloquent words and manner and his genuine enthusiasm. I listened as one entranced, and experienced the feeling so annoying to me afterwards that I was in the presence of a stronger nature—a more powerful mind—and that my weak intellect and reason was overwhelmed in the strong current of his. When I think of it, now that he is not here present, I declare I feel quite angry with him."

Isabel laughed her pleasant laugh—"Why, Diana, I believe you are angry because your vanity is touched. You are accustomed to see all mankind at your feet, to listen to soft speeches and flatteries and to have cast upon your fair face numberless languishing looks; and, behold! you

come across a humble, obscure, unknown, country surgeon who is proof against your beauty, your wit, your graces—all your most valued charms—who simply treats you with the quiet respect he would a day labourer's aged wife—his patient. Ha ! ha ! ha ! that is capital ! Diana Featherstonehaugh, the county beauty, victress of all hearts, piqued and angry because a village doctor does not fall down and worship her ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

And Isabel laughed her low soft musical laugh, which now, however, jarred on her friend's ear like some horrid discord.

“ Ah ! ” she cried, her check flushing, her bright eyes flashing like gems. “ We shall see. I will punish him yet—this cold proud Lorimer—proud in his very humility and poverty.”

“ What ! you think to make a conquest of poor Andrew Lorimer ! ” said Isabel, reproachfully : “ to torture his good tender heart with a hopeless love. Ah, Diana, you are indeed cruel ! You must have fresh votaries at your shrine, fresh victims at your feet. You might at least spare the poor surgeon of Festonhaugh ! ”

“ We shall see,” Diana replied briskly “ I will not be defied and treated as a child, or, as you rightly put it, Isabel, like some poor old woman patient.”

“ Ah, Diana, all your attempts in that quarter will be vain. Doctor Lorimer is provided with a coat of mail. He is proof against your arts and darts.”

“ A coat of mail ? ”

“ Yes, indifference : a calm gentle nature, not to be swayed by blind passion either for good or evil. He is a man who will always act according to his reason, will do what he thinks right, and

would no more suffer himself to fall hopelessly in love than he would allow a disease to seize upon a patient, without combating and conquering it."

"Ah, we shall see," Diana replied again confidently.

"Besides," pursued Isabel, "Doctor Andrew Lorimer is already married."

"Married!" cried Diana now greatly astonished. "I never heard of it."

"Yes, married; and he is not the man to prove unfaithful to a well-loved bride even in thought."

"Married! and to whom?" asked Diana with dilating eyes.

"To science, learning—profession. That is Andrew Lorimer's wife; and no mortal woman, were she as fair as Venus herself, persuasive as Delilah who betrayed Samson, can wean him from his fealty."

CHAPTER VIII.

A SURPRISE.

DIANA laughed outright. "Ah!" she said, "if that is my only rival, I have little cause to fear failure. If I have not beauty, wit, and cleverness enough to make him love me more than his books, more than his profession—to render him willing, nay, anxious even, to extinguish his ambitious dreams, and give up all the world for my sake—then, indeed, I am greatly mistaken—have overrated my power and influence over the hearts of men."

Isabel clasped her arm, and, looking full in her face with her soft, earnest eyes, said :

"Oh! Diana, you are not serious surely? I thought, and still hope, you are only joking."

"What do you mean by serious, Isabel? do not intend to marry the man, that would be too absurd. The idea of Diana Featherstonehaugh the wife of a village doctor and bone-setter! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But are you really serious, Diana, in saying that you will win the heart of this young man merely for pique, and thoughtless cruel sport? I hope you do not mean it."

"But, indeed, I do mean it! What nonsense you talk, Isabel, to be sure. As though it were a crime to use my charms and captivations, such as they are, to the best advantage, and make all

men who come within my influence bow the head and bend the knee."

"Proud words—words of vanity and folly, Diana. Words which, if acted on, will some day bring bitter sorrow."

"Don't talk nonsense, Isabel, I tell you again. Have you turned nun all at once, that you thus profess to look upon flirtation—from all ages the amusement of beautiful women—as a crime?"

"Diana, all that I urge is that you should not lend your deadly love, shoot your fatal shaft at the young surgeon of Festonhaugh. Spare him for the sake of his poor patients, their best and kindest friend. Spare him for the sake of those who admire and respect him. Spare him for the sake of the good he has done, the good he delights in continually doing. Spare him, Diana, for my sake."

Gentle Isabel took her friend's hand as she urged her request thus eloquently, and gazed pleadingly in her face.

But Diana shook her head and replied, laughingly :

"What a tender-hearted little donkey you are, Isabel. You look upon the most harmless amusement as though it were really cruel and wicked. Come, do not let us talk any more about it. We will have chocolate up here.—I really cannot get papa to bring me some good tea from London. True, it is a guinea a pound, but that can be no object to him. That is another thing which makes me angry with this Doctor Lorimer. Papa sent me over to him the other day. I arrived in the evening, and the tea equipage was laid in his little room. And really it was a charming little room, everything clean, tasteful, and good ;

and such a nice, clean, homely old woman to wait upon him. The old soul seemed to look upon him as a saint or some superior being."

"And did that annoy you, Diana?"

"No, but I'll tell you what did. With that easy, quiet air of politeness, mingled with composure and indifference, he asked me to take a cup of tea. I consented, half expecting to taste some horrid compound or other. To my surprise, he gave me a dish of the most delicious Bohea I ever tasted."

"Surely that did not vex you, Diana? I can understand you might feel annoyed if, as you expected, he had given you some horrid compound of nauseous flavour."

"But it did annoy me. To think that a village surgeon could place before me Bohea of most delicate flavour, fit for the table of a prince, while I myself, Diana Featherstonehaugh, could not obtain anything like it."

"Really, Diana," said Isabel, smiling, "if all your troubles are of no graver nature than this, you will indeed be a fortunate girl. But did you not mention that Doctor Lorimer was here?"

"Yes, certainly, I left him in the drawing-room."

"But will it not seem rude to leave him all alone?"

"Oh! nonsense. How inconsistent you are, Isabel. At one moment you beg of me to have nothing whatever to do with him, to leave him alone and not make him fall in love with me, and now you urge me to go to him and overwhelm him with attentions, I suppose. No, no, Isabel, that is not the way to bring a man to your feet.

I shall not run after him with a net like a child hunting a butterfly, but he, like a poor, silly moth, shall flutter into the flame."

"Diana, how you talk! You really make me shudder. Alas! poor Doctor Lorimer."

Diana laughed a low, satisfied laugh, and taking Isabel's hand, said:

"You silly little thing, I do think you look upon me as some terrible ogre. But I am not so very cruel after all. In proof whereof, if you wish it, I will send and invite him to come and take chocolate up here with us."

"Oh, no, Diana, I would not advise that, although I believe it is customary in high society for ladies to receive gentlemen in their boudoirs."

She had hardly spoken when there came a knock at the door, and Diana's maid entered.

"If you please, miss, Doctor Lorimer wishes to speak to you at once. The messenger you sent on horseback has just returned."

"Doctor Lorimer wishes to see me—good, so he shall. And, dear Isabel, I will receive him here. Of course you will remain and bear me company."

Isabel merely shrugged her shoulders slightly and said:

"As you please, Di. You know you always do exactly as you like."

"Show Doctor Lorimer up here," said Diana. "Stay a moment, though; have the chocolate service brought up first. Draw the pink curtains over the window, and arrange the place becomingly."

It was now near sundown, and a bright, glorious evening. When the pink curtains were drawn over the window, the little room was

bathed in rose-coloured light. The furniture and panelling were of pure white, relieved with gold, while oval enamelled pictures let into the wainscoting, and beautifully executed, gave an air of refinement to the whole.

The cushions of the couches and chairs were of rose-coloured velvet, and in place of carpets there was spread over the floor the skins of animals, remarkable for the softness of their fur.

At one end of the room, which was oval in shape, was a large pier glass; at the other a shrine and crucifix, with a *prie-dieu* for kneeling over.

Altogether, it was a most tasteful and luxurious little gem of a room.

On this occasion Diana took especial care that everything should look as pretty and attractive as possible, including herself; for she hastily, with her maid's assistance, put on an evening dress and arranged her hair.

Soon after the chocolate service was brought up, and placed on a little table close to the ottoman on which Diana and Isabel were seated.

"You may send Doctor Lorimer up, Cicely," the young lady said, after one final glance in the glass.

Doctor Lorimer was shortly ushered in, and, stopping on the threshold in unaffected wonder and admiration at the pretty "watteau" like scene, bowed low.

Diana rose, and said with suave politeness:

"Pray be seated, doctor."

But Isabel advanced towards him and offered her hand cordially, which he as frankly took.

"How do you do, Doctor Lorimer? I am very glad indeed to see you."

"Oh ! Miss Vanstone," the young surgeon said, a gleam of pleased surprise lighting up his face, "this is indeed an unexpected pleasure. How is the worthy old lady, your aunt?"

A slight frown might have been noted on Diana's face as she witnessed this cordial greeting between her friend and Andrew Lorimer, especially as she noted the expression of undisguised pleasure on the young surgeon's face.

For a moment an unworthy thought had possession of her mind.

"Ah ! perhaps Isabel has good reason to use all her influence with me not to captivate this young man. It may be that she herself is smitten, and fears for me to enter the lists against her."

CHAPTER IX.

DANGER FORESHADOWED.

DIANA FEATHERSTONEHAUGH, with all her faults, was neither suspicious nor deceitful, and had not the faintest trace of malice in her disposition.

So she could not for any length of time harbour evil thoughts against any one, especially a dear friend, and quickly dismissed the unworthy feeling of jealousy which, for a moment, she allowed to have place in her breast.

Andrew Lorimer, after his first quick keen glance around the luxuriously furnished little room, appeared to take no notice.

"You wished to see me, Doctor Lorimer," said Diana, in her most winning accents. "But stay—let me first offer you some chocolate."

"Thank you. You are very kind," said Lorimer, accepting her offer, and then at once proceeded :

"Yes, Miss Featherstonehaugh, I find I cannot remain all night. The messenger you kindly despatched to my house brought what I required, and also a note from the friends of a patient of mine—who is, I fear, sinking under a lingering illness—earnestly urging me to visit him to-night, as other symptoms have made their appearance. These fresh symptoms may indicate a change perhaps for the better; and if so, and proper treatment is adopted, much suffering and a life may be saved."

"Good heavens, doctor! And what of our patient below, Mr. Montaigne? You said it was not safe to leave him, and that he must be watched and tended with the utmost care."

"Yes, it is true, and it is that which troubles me. It is not safe to leave him to the care of servants or hired nurses. I have had much experience of them, and know that even the best of them will neglect their charge—fall asleep and even leave the room, though strictly enjoined not to do so."

"But what is to be done, doctor?" said Diana aghast. "Surely you are not going to leave this poor wounded, perhaps dying, man alone on my hands. My father away, and all, too."

"This is what I propose to do, Miss Featherstonhaugh. I will ride full speed to see the patient to whose bedside I have been summoned, and will also ride full speed back. I thought from my judgment of your character (and I am seldom wrong) that you were one to be relied upon in an emergency, that though often apparently careless and capricious, you had the power in you to rise equal to any emergency. I thought I could safely trust the wounded man in your charge, after having carefully instructed you as to what measures to adopt in the event of certain unfavourable symptoms appearing—such as a rush of blood to the mouth."

"Oh, terrible!" cried Diana; but added almost immediately, "Do you really think I should have courage and coolness enough, doctor?"

"I am quite sure you would," he answered. "That is, if you made up your mind—nerved yourself for the occasion. I will give you full instructions," he said presently, seeming to take

her consent to the arrangement for granted. "I have no need to start for half an hour yet, as I do not wish to see my patient until fully an hour after night has set in—that is the time when the symptoms are at their highest in this case."

Doctor Lorimer now remained silent, looking into his cup of chocolate, apparently buried in pensive thought.

Diana regarded him from under her long eyelashes with a look of deep interest.

He sat three-quarter face toward her, the evening light streaming through the pink curtained window falling on his clear-cut classical features, and giving the face, really so pale, a warm, glowing tint.

"What a handsome face!" she said to herself. "What quiet self-possession, determination, earnestness, one can read in the expression! He is a strange man. I cannot yet understand him. Can it be that he is ambitious—audacious—that he aspires to my hand, and is playing a deep crafty game? No, no, I will not believe it; it cannot be. Nature, if she stamped truth and honesty on a human face, has done so on that of Andrew Lorimer!"

The sunlight shortly fading away, as the orb of day sank below the horizon, gave place to a soft delicious twilight.

There was a long silence, as though all three felt the soothing influence of the time and place.

Diana furtively, dreamily, observing the young doctor, who on his part, buried in his own thoughts, seemed quite unaware that he was the object of her earnest regard.

And Isabel; she, too, was carefully watching Diana, noting the play of the features, the ex-

pression of her face, and above all, her eyes, so constantly fixed on Andrew Lorimer.

"The calm, patronising, almost insolent manner," soliloquised the heiress of Featherstonehaugh, "in which he informed me he could read my character, would have made me furious with another man. But as I listened to his gently spoken, measured words, it seemed as though anger could not have place in my breast against him. My spirit seemed to rise in arms for a moment, only to sink abashed before the influence of words and manner. It was as though his will overshadowed and absorbed mine."

She paused for a time in her train of thought, still regarding Lorimer steadfastly, earnestly, with eyes nearly closed.

It was a curious dreamy look this with which she was regarding him, as though she herself were not conscious of it.

Isabel watched her closely, and slowly there dawned upon her mind strange thoughts—a strange idea.

All three were still silent. Lorimer was in the habit of indulging in long fits of silent thought, heedless of either the company, situation, or circumstances, and the humour seemed to be on him now.

And Diana, too, felt a strange inexplicable pleasure in keeping her eyes fixed on the pale, handsome features of this silent, earnest young surgeon.

As for Isabel, she did not choose to break the silence, but quietly observed both of them, more particularly noting the ever-varying expressions playing over Diana's fair face, and wondering and trying to guess at the nature of her thoughts.

"I will break through that icy coldness," Diana said to herself with such sudden energy of thought that her lips actually moved, and she almost spoke aloud. "I will warm that marble statue into life. In his calm indifference he appears now to have the advantage of me. I will make him love me passionately, madly, and then I will be mistress of his heart and will—he my abject slave."

A slight motion of her hand, which rested on the little table, overturned a cup.

Andrew Lorimer awoke from his reverie with a start.

"Pardon, ladies. I fear I have been very rude. I have a way of indulging in fits of thought at all times."

"You should get rid of such a bad habit," remarked Diana.

"I do not know that it is a bad habit," replied Lorimer, with the utmost indifference and coolness.

Diana stared at him, and felt half inclined to be angry ; while Isabel laughed her gentle pleasant little laugh at Lorimer's naïvete, and Diana's indignation at what she considered his audacity in saying he "Did not know it was a bad habit."

Absence of mind in the presence of Diana Featherstonehaugh, the county beauty and heiress of Featherstonehaugh Hall and estates, not a bad habit, not an unpardonable fault !

Was ever such audacity heard of ?

And, yet, she could not be angry, strive as hard as she would, and found herself the next minute listening seriously to every word the young surgeon said.

He proceeded to give her minute directions as

to her treatment of the patient during his absence, and especially impressed on her how to act if certain symptoms he carefully described should appear.

When he was satisfied she perfectly understood him, and was not likely to forget, he rose and calmly and quietly took his leave, promising to return at the earliest possible moment.

Diana rose and went to the window of her little room, which looked out on the front where Lorimer's horse was brought round.

She watched him mount and ride away at a hard gallop, and then, heaving a sigh, proceeded to light the candles in the candelabra.

Isabel came to her, took her hand, and gazing fully, earnestly, in her eyes, said :

"Diana, I implored you not to exercise your arts on Andrew Lorimer—not to endeavour to ensnare him in the silken net of charms and fascinations—for the sake of his poor patients, to whom he is at once physician and friend."

"Silly girl !"

"I implored you to spare him for my sake, Diana."

"What nonsense, Isabel !"

"And now, Diana, heed my words. I have a dim foreboding of future evil."

As she spoke, her usually soft sweet tones grew louder, more energetic, and she grasped Diana's hand tighter.

"Spare him, Diana—if for no other, for your own sake ; *for I see foreshadowed that which you yourself do not yet dream of perhaps !*"

CHAPTER X.

THE FAIR WATCHERS.

THE hot blood flushing up to Diana's face, crimsoning her fair transparent skin from head to bosom, told the tale that this earnest speech of Isabel's had indeed gone home.

She experienced a feeling of pique, anger even, against her friend; and until that moment no harsh or unkind thought had ever found place in her breast against gentle Isabel.

She persuaded herself that there was no reason for her friend's expressive words and manner, and that her caution, as to Andrew Lorimer, was misplaced, and quite uncalled for.

An angry reply was on the tip of her tongue, but looking in Isabel's sweet face, observing her tender, loving eyes bent on her with a look full of love and kindness, the harsh words died away as she formed them in her mind, and before they could find utterance.

She laughed, and tried to make it a pleasant laugh, but therein failed signally.

It was not a discordant laugh, her voice was naturally too melodious for that, but there was a hardness, and an acute observer could have told that it was not a laugh from the heart.

"You are a strange girl, Isabel," she said, linking her arm in her friend's, "with your extraordinary

fancies and forebodings of terrible misfortunes in the future."

"It is my love for you, Diana," replied Isabel, "which makes me fearful, and you know how headstrong and impetuous you are."

"You are a dear good little thing," said Diana, kissing her; "but you must give up all such foolish fancies and have trust in my strength of mind—my coldness of heart if you will—so far as love is concerned, to save me from being mortally wounded by Cupid's darts. Come, let us go and see our patient."

Isabel sighed and said no more, and the two girls, arm in arm, sought the room where lay Valentine Montaigne.

He was asleep under the effect of a soothing draught administered by Andrew Lorimer.

He had evinced a strong repugnance to being put to bed, and lay dressed on an ottoman—with the exception of his coat.

These were the days of frilled and laced shirts, embroidered waistcoats, and such like; from which the beaux of our time are debarred by fashion.

Valentine Montaigne was blessed by nature with an exceedingly handsome person, indeed, his face was often pronounced to be more than handsome—of a soft and feminine beauty.

The pallor consequent on his accident made his features appear more delicate; and lying with closed eyes, and hand white as that of a lady, and with the jewelled rings on his fingers laid carelessly across the breast, he fully justified Diana's murmured exclamation to her friend,

"Is he not handsome?"

He was very fair even for one of pure Anglo-Saxon race, with curling light hair, a slight

moustache, for he was an officer in the yeomanry, and in those days none but cavalry men wore a moustache.

His features were of a purely classic mould—nose thin and straight, eyebrows arched and clearly marked, eyes now closed in sleep, a full round chin and mouth modelled after those of the Apollo Belvidere—altogether, in short, as he lay thus in deep slumber, it would have been hard for the most hypercritical to find a fault.

The old housekeeper remained in the room, and to her Diana said—

“You can go, Gertrude; Miss Vanstone and I are going to remain with Mr. Montaigne until Dr. Lorimer returns.”

The woman left, and then the two friends seated themselves on a sofa at a little distance from the sleeping patient.

Who would think, to look at him as he lies so calm and peaceful, no signs of pain or mortal hurt on his features, that his life was in imminent danger!

“He is deadly pale,” remarked Isabel, “as white and colourless as though he was a statue of marble instead of a living man.”

“A statue of marble! Yes, he is handsome as the most famed masterpiece of antiquity. Painter or sculptor never drew or chiselled a more perfect face.”

Diana spoke quite enthusiastically; but then she was speaking to a bosom friend, and the subject of her eulogium was apparently in a sound sleep.

Isabel smiled slightly, and replied:

“Poor gentleman! it seems like a mockery, extolling him for his beauty of person, as he lies at death’s door.”

"Isabel," said Diana, pettishly, "you are always prophesying evil—painting everything in the darkest colours. Perhaps you will deny next that he is handsome."

"Nay, Diana, I grant that the gentleman is well favoured, but, withal, too delicate in features for a man—the face is that of a girl."

"He is a brave and honourable man, and has proved it."

"I grant it, and yet maintain that there is a something wanting in the face. It lacks expression, or perhaps I should say, that character and firmness is what it wants."

"On my word, Isabel, you are censorious. Tell me, then, your notion of manly beauty. Do you know anyone with superior claims to Valentine Montaigne?"

Isabel reflected for a moment, and then replied :

"Not, perhaps, in the sense you mean, Diana, but I can name a face I think as handsome, with infinitely more character and expression—a face which speaks the nature of the man—a face whereon is shown firmness and resolution—a face whereon shines the light of intelligence."

"And do you mean to say that the features of Valentine Montaigne denote stupidity, dullness, a heavy plodding nature? For if so, therein you are wrong. Valentine Montaigne is noted for his wit and vivacity, and is generally acknowledged by our sex as the gayest cavalier in these parts."

"That may be so, and yet I may be right in my judgment, Diana. Pretty, sparkling, erratic, uncertain as a beautiful butterfly without fixed purpose or pursuit, seeking pleasure and amusement, flitting from flower to flower."

"Purpose or pursuit! What nonsense you

talk, Isabel! as if a gentleman of ancient family and good estate—for the Montaignes are wealthy—need trouble himself with any pursuit. But there, I will not talk to you any more on the subject. Stay one moment. Who is this paragon of yours to whom you give the palm before Valentine Montaigne?"

Isabel hesitated and looked confused.

It was a delicate question, and now that she remembered what had previously passed between them on the subject, she felt shy at answering.

But Diana pressed her, and would not be refused: and colouring up to her temples, she said,

"Well, Diana, I think that, both in features and expression, Dr. Lorimer has a finer face than Valentine Montaigne."

"Isabel," cried Diana, "I do believe you have taken leave of your senses. You gravely cautioned me against falling in love with this village surgeon, and it really appears that you yourself are smitten."

Isabel spoke up warmly now, and looked, for a moment, as angry as her gentle nature would allow her to be:

"You wrong me in saying so, Diana. It is unjust and unkind of you. Can I not express an opinion, on a matter of taste, without bringing down on myself such unworthy suspicions?"

"There, there—don't be angry, Bella dear," said Diana, placing her arm round Isabel's neck; "I did not mean to offend you. You know how foolishly and thoughtlessly I speak. Forgive me. You shall enjoy your own opinion, and I mine. Were it possible to decide, I would back my judgment by a wager."

Isabel clutched her arm, and said in a hurried excited manner though in a low tone—

“Look—look, Diana! He is awake.”

And directing her eyes towards the ottoman, on which the wounded man lay, she saw his eyes wide open.

And, as she looked, there came a faint smile over the face, and in a low, weak voice he spoke.

“I quite agree with Miss Vanstone. You would lose your wager, Miss Featherstonchaugh.”

The confusion of the two ladies, on thus suddenly discovering that their conversation had been overheard, may be imagined, but would not be easy to describe.

Isabel felt ashamed and mortified beyond measure, and made a start as if to escape from the room.

But Diana stopped her.

The latter, though of course also confused and startled, did not look on it in such a serious light as Isabel, and recovering herself, laughed lightly : and then approaching Valentine Montaigne, said,

“You must not talk, sir. The doctor has ridden over to visit another patient, but will return shortly. Before he left he commissioned us to watch by you, as he did not consider yours a case to be entrusted to a servant or hired nurse.”

He would have spoken again, but she shook her head and gently laid two fingers on his lips, saying,

“I did not imagine you heard our conversation. I fear our chattering awoke you. You must try and go to sleep again.”

Isabel was greatly surprised at the cool and

quiet manner in which Diana treated this rather embarrassing incident.

And after that they withdrew to a more distant part of the room and spoke in whispers.

Andrew Lorimer must have ridden hard, for he was back much sooner than they expected.

And having resigned their charge, they left the room.

Isabel said to her friend, "Andrew Lorimer would not have done so. I am sure he would not have lain awake and listened to our conversation. I think it hardly honourable on the part of Mr. Montaigne."

"Dr. Andrew Lorimer again," replied Diana, pettishly, "always Andrew Lorimer. I shall begin to hate him soon."

"And yet you spoke of captivating him—of winning his love."

Diana laughed.

"Perhaps," she said, "that would be the best way to show my dislike."

CHAPTER XI.

THE LETTER.

BUT little more was said by the two young ladies concerning the awkward and rather unpleasant affair which had occurred in the room of the wounded man.

Diana, quick-tempered and proud, was stung by Isabel's last words, to the effect that Andrew Lorimer would not have behaved as Valentine had done; that, in fact, the young surgeon was more honourable and noble-minded than the scion of the house of Montaigne.

And Isabel, though not angry, felt hurt and ashamed at her words in praise of the young man, whom she supposed asleep, being overheard by him.

Her modesty was wounded, and altogether she was much more deeply affected than Diana, who, in her gay, careless manner, would have dismissed the subject entirely from her mind but for Isabel's words relative to Andrew Lorimer, which caused a feeling of pique and annoyance, not so much with her friend as the village surgeon, who was, of course, innocent of all offence.

And, moreover, although she would not allow the thought to take definite shape, there was a lurking feeling—scarcely strong enough to be called jealousy—against Isabel.

The latter's warm advocacy of Lorimer—her

deep anxiety that Diana should not ensnare him in her siren toils—showed an interest which appeared to the heiress of Featherstonehaugh not to be warranted by admiration of his character or respect for his virtues.

And, despite all she said about hating him and so forth, all her angry thoughts faded away when he was in her presence.

He seemed, without effort or even consciousness on his own part, to exert a powerful, almost irresistible, influence over her mind and heart.

Before his gentle, quiet, yet self-possessed and firm demeanour, her angry passion, foolish jealousies, and unwomanish pique seemed to sink down abashed.

It was as though she not only was unable to combat him, but could not even make show of resistance or rebellion to the mysterious influence which it was quite certain he exerted over her.

But when he was not present, her proud spirit rose in arms ; she declared to herself that his very coolness and self-possession in her presence was an impertinence, and inwardly resolved that she would yet bring him to her feet.

That night she resolved she would not speak to him, or even see him on any pretence ; but of course, as hostess, she felt bound to give orders that he should be well attended on, and despatched the housekeeper to ask at what time he would have supper served.

Isabel had retired to her own room, not in anger nor even pique, but to indulge in that pleasant sort of grief—a good cry.

Diana was alone in the drawing-room, and in answer to her message, Andrew Lorimer came himself.

"I thought I would come and see you before you retired for the night," he said, "to report to you on the state of our patient."

"I sent to you, Doctor Lorimer, not on that subject, but to ask at what hour you would like supper served."

The young man smiled one of his quiet, sweet smiles, and said :

"Supper, or indeed any meal, is a matter of very small moment to me, in comparison with the welfare of a patient. You need not trouble to have supper laid for me ; a crust of bread and cheese and a glass of beer in the patient's room will be more than sufficient for me."

"I beg that you will allow me to see you are properly waited upon. Want of hospitality is not a fault of the Featherstonehaughs," she replied proudly, "and I should not like the servants to say that Doctor Lorimer had bread and cheese and ale served him for his supper. With your permission, I will order the best the house can afford, both in viands and wine, to be served you."

He shook his head, and said, with another quiet smile :

"Thanks, young lady ; but I must beg to decline. I am a plain man, accustomed to plain living, and the sumptuous fare you would provide would, I fear, be too much for me. I should neglect my patient while enjoying myself."

Now, Diana was determined to have her own way. She declared to herself that he should yield to her on this point, not that it was important, but because she thought she would bring to an abrupt ending the habit of yielding her own will to any one's—above all others, Andrew Lorimer's.

Meantime she had rung, and a footman appeared in answer to the bell.

Lorimer, who, dismissing the subject of supper, had again commenced to talk of the state of his patient, paused while she spoke to the servant.

‘James, can you tell me what there is in the larder?’

“Yes, my lady” (in those days the mistress of the house among the gentry, though without rank, was always ‘my lady’), “I can tell you nearly. There is a cold pheasant, a venison pastry, turkey, capon, ham, game pie, smoked Russian tongues——”

“The house-steward has the key of the Colonel’s private wine cellar?”

“Yes, my lady.”

“You will bring it to me; and see that supper, both hot and cold, is laid for Doctor Lorimer in the small dining-room at any hour he may order.”

“Yes, my lady,” replied the man, and was about leaving, when Lorimer hastily interrupted.

“Stay a moment.” Then addressing Diana: “I really must beg to be excused. I am not accustomed to sumptuous suppers, and certainly do not feel inclined to commence now. I am here, not for my own gratification, but to watch over a patient in a critical state, and it would interfere with that duty to take advantage of your too bounteous hospitality; so with your permission I will order your servant to bring me a crust of bread and cheese and a small jug of ale into the room where lies my patient.”

Diana inwardly chafed at this, but was powerless—bound to bend her will to his once again, in spite of her resolve to have her own way on this occasion.

The servant hesitated, and looked to her, and she was compelled by good breeding to confirm Lorimer's words.

"You will attend to Doctor Lorimer's orders in every respect, James. See that he is as well waited on as would be my father or myself."

This she said in a cold haughty tone, not deigning the young surgeon a look.

And having thus in a grand manner performed the duties of hospitality, she made a sweeping curtsey, and wished him good-night.

But Lorimer, innocent of all evil or offence, in deed or word or thought, was not thus to be got rid of.

In the quietest and calmest manner in the world—not noticing, or at all events paying no attention to the cold, haughty manner in which she wished him good-night—he said,

"Stay a moment, Miss Featherstonebaugh. I want to say a few words to you."

Now, without absolute rudeness, it was impossible for her to leave; and Diana, despite her wayward temper, was too refined and lady-like by nature ever to forget herself so far.

She bowed coldly, and waited to hear what he had to say.

"About our patient, I am glad to say I think the worst is over—that his condition has decidedly improved."

"I am most happy to hear it," replied Diana, in the same freezing manner.

"I shall remain up with him all night, and in the morning hope to be able to pronounce him out of danger—he will only need constant care and attention."

"Do you think he will be fit to be moved

shortly ? ” asked Diana, almost compelled to say something.

“ Scarcely to his home. It is too far—the road is rugged. It is necessary I should have him almost under my eye for several days—perhaps a week.”

Just at that moment a servant again entered the room.

“ A letter, my lady. It has just arrived by a mounted courier.”

Diana said: “ See that the courier has proper refreshment,” and then took the letter.

As she glanced at the writing she gave a slight cry, and then breaking the seal, read it.

“ LONDON.

“ DAUGHTER DIANA,—I write this to say that I shall be home on the morrow evening after you receive this.

“ Sir Clyfford Clyffe and other friends will come with me ; so I beg you will have all necessary preparations made for their accommodation, in a manner befitting a Featherstonehaugh. See that the larder is well filled, and that nothing is wanting.—Wishing you health and happiness,

“ Your father,

“ HECTOR FEATHERSTONEHAUGH.”

“ Great heavens ! ” cried Diana, pale and terrified ; “ my father returns to-morrow ! I dread his finding Valentine Montaigne an inmate of *his house* ! ”

CHAPTER XII.

DIANA'S TERROR—THE RESULT.

IN her terror and dismay at the news that her terrible father would arrive on the morrow, Diana forgot her anger, and turned to Andrew Lorimer for aid and advice under these circumstances.

"Oh! Doctor Lorimer," she cried, clasping her hands, every trace of pride and coldness now banished from her face, "whatever shall I do? You cannot imagine what a deadly hatred my father bears towards the Montaignes. If Mr. Valentine remains in the house and he were to find him here, I feel but too sure that it would end in bloodshed."

"You think your father would insult him and force him to fight a duel?" said Lorimer, more to give him time to consider the novel aspect of affairs than anything else.

"Think! Oh heavens! I am only too sure of it. And then, no one can doubt the result. You know my father's dreadful temper, and also you are aware how fatally successful he has been as a duellist—how not one, nor two, but ten men have fallen to his deadly aim; and now this poor wounded gentleman seems doomed to be the next on the terrible black list. The last time he fought," Diana cried, growing excited, and pointing from a large bay window of the drawing-room, "it was out there—on the lawn, in sight

from my chamber. It was at seven o'clock in the morning it took place; but it was summer time, and I saw it all. Never shall I forget the terrible scene. I heard voices, strange voices, and, drawing the blind slightly, I looked forth. My eyes seemed fascinated, and I could not withdraw my gaze from the terrible tableau until the tragedy was played out. My father stood at some ten paces from another gentleman, each with a pistol in his hand. At a little distance from him and his antagonist, there stood two other gentlemen. One of these cried, 'Are you ready, gentlemen?' I heard both reply, 'Ready, and recognised my father's deep voice; then followed the words: 'At the word three, *fire*. One, two, three!' And as the last word was pronounced, both pistols were fired, and the duel was over. My father's unhappy opponent, Lieutenant Linnoult, a young officer in the navy, staggered forward, threw his arms about wildly, and then fell; but before he did so, I saw him for a brief space—not more than a second—and the dreadful sight is for ever imprinted on my brain. He was shot through the head, and died in less than half a minute. Ah! I see it now; my fancy conjures up the dreadful picture, and it will occur again—again, I know it will."

Diana here was overcome by the memory of the tragedy, and in her fear that such another one would be enacted, burst into a fit of hysterical weeping, and, throwing herself on a couch, hid her face in the cushion.

Of an excitable, passionate temperament, hers was the very nature to break down under any severe mental strain or shock.

After a few moments she became quieter, then

first the sobs ceased, and then the breathing, and she lay utterly motionless in a dead faint.

An excitable girl's fainting away is not usually attended with serious consequences ; but Andrew Lorimer, looking in her face, saw something which alarmed him, and when feeling her pulse he discovered that the heart's action had entirely ceased, he was aware that the result of this sorrow might be fatal.

He was not the man to flurry himself, but after a moment's thought he walked rapidly down the staircase to the hall, and there seeing one of the maid servants, said to her—

“Do you know where Miss Vanstone is?”

“In her room, sir.”

“Show me to it at once.”

The girl looked astonished, but obeyed, for not only was Andrew Lorimer respected and honoured by all, but there was that in his manner sufficient to show that he was not speaking without good reason.

So without a word she led the way to the young lady's chamber.

“That is it, sir. The rose-room it is called. There is a rose over the door.”

“Thank you,” Lorimer said, and at once knocking sharply, said :

“Miss Vanstone, are you awake?”

“Yes. Who is there?”

“It is I, Doctor Lorimer. If you are dressed, come at once to the door.”

Now many young ladies would have felt offended, outraged almost, at a gentleman knocking at the door of their bed-chamber ; but Isabel had such perfect faith and respect for the young surgeon, that no thought of evil crossed her

mind. She was lying dressed on the bed, her fair face flushed with weeping.

Without even waiting to bathe her eyes or smooth her hair, she rose and opened the door.

"Nothing the matter, doctor, I hope?"

"Nothing serious. Miss Featherstonehaugh has had an attack of hysterics, followed by a fainting fit. I am going at once to prepare a strong restorative. Go you to the drawing-room, loosen her dress and stays, and sprinkle her face with water. Until I come do no more. I should say nothing to the servants, as they can do no good whatever."

Isabel, frightened and pale enough, now hurried off to the drawing-room, where she found Diana still motionless on the couch, and utterly insensible—in a swoon as deep as death itself.

She strictly followed Andrew Lorimer's directions, and in a very short time he joined her.

"Do not raise her head," he said, hurriedly. "People often do so, but it is a great mistake, and has ere now proved fatal. Fainting is caused by the heart ceasing to send blood to the brain, and, of course, when the heart, momentarily stopped, commences to throb again, slowly and feebly, its task is the easier done when the head lies low."

"Do you think this faint serious, doctor?" asked Isabel, in terrified accents, for she observed that Lorimer looked very grave, and was most assiduous and energetic in the measures he took, cutting her stays open, and forcing every second or so a teaspoonful of medicine into her mouth.

"Only if her heart is affected," he replied, not ceasing for a moment in his efforts to restore her to animation.

"You do not think it is?" cried Isabel.

"I hope and trust not," he replied; "but there is a look on the features I do not like—a faint bluish tint in the pallor of her face. The heart is very slow to renew its functions. Ah! now I feel a faint throb."

He kept his finger on her pulse all the while, and hailed this symptom of returning life with the greatest satisfaction, for at one time he really believed the case serious.

Slowly and painfully, with many a gasp and sigh, Diana returned to consciousness, and the first thing she saw as she opened her eyes was the grave, tender face of Andrew Lorimer, who bent over her, still holding her hand, in order to observe the beating of the pulse.

And then she closed her eyes again, and a feeling of lassitude stole over her, and presently, again looking through the windows of her soul, her gaze fell upon Andrew Lorimer, still regarding her in the same grave, earnest manner.

It seemed to have a sort of soothing influence on her, and by-and-by she went off into a peaceful sleep.

And the last thing she saw was the same grave, handsome face and earnest eyes steadfastly regarding her.

Then as her returning consciousness lapsed into the mist of sleep, the last faint thought in her mind was of Andrew Lorimer—a pleasant, gentle remembrance, without a tinge of the ill-temper she had felt against him previously.

Had he some wonderful power of *fascination over her, this quiet, grave doctor?*

CHAPTER XIII.

ANDREW LORIMER'S RESOLVE.

WHEN Diana Featherstonehaugh, having recovered from her swoon, awakened from the sleep which followed it, she was too weak and exhausted to do anything, mental or physical, and reclined languidly on the couch with half closed eyes. But in a little while nature, aided by a powerful cordial, began to assert its power, and she gradually gathered strength.

But though the feeling of physical exhaustion passed off, she by no means regained her energy of mind.

It seemed as though her will was softened and subdued—almost her very nature altered.

No longer did she feel angry with Doctor Lorimer.

After the lapse of a sufficient interval, perceiving that she had entirely recovered, he said,

"I will leave you now, Miss Featherstonehaugh, and go and see how my other patient fares. You only require a little repose, and will be as well as ever shortly."

Then with a smile and slight bow to Isabel, he added,

"I leave you in excellent hands."

Isabel acknowledged his words by one of her frank, sweet smiles, and he was about leaving when Diana spoke. Her voice was low and

feeble, but every syllable was plainly audible to him, and caused a strange thrill at his heart. He drew nearer to her, and she went on to say,

"You are very kind. You will come back? You will not be long?"

The words were accompanied by a grateful, languishing, almost loving look, and at the same time she held forth her hand.

He took it in his, looking a little confused and embarrassed, for Isabel's eyes were on his face and he knew it.

And as he held the small white hand, he was conscious of a slight pressure, just enough to be perceptible. Without knowing how or why, or indeed reasoning about the matter at all, he felt that this wayward, beautiful girl had a strange power of fascination, and that, at the time, he was under its influence.

Indeed, it would appear that though his was undoubtedly the stronger mind, and exercised a powerful influence over the thoughts and feelings of Diana Featherstonehaugh, he was drawn towards her and attracted by an unseen, mysterious power. In fact, as the chemists say, these two people so totally different in nature and disposition, had yet an affinity one for the other.

However, Andrew Lorimer was not one to yield to feeling or passion easily and without a struggle, and so, doing his utmost to command his voice and features, he replied gravely,

"I will return and report to you on the condition of the patient as soon as possible, Miss Featherstonehaugh."

Diana sighed, and closing her eyes as the young surgeon left the room, appeared to go off into a languishing reverie. The placid expression of

her features sufficiently denoting that her thoughts were not of an unpleasant nature.

Presently Andrew Lorimer returned and reported that Valentine Montaigne was free from pain, and that he had every hope of a favourable termination of his case.

"But what about to-morrow, Doctor Lorimer?" said Diana. "You know my father is to return, and I look forward with horror to his finding a scion of the house of Montaigne here."

The young surgeon said gravely,

"We must hope for the best. Perhaps, if all goes well, it may be safe to move the patient. I will do my best."

With these words he wished the ladies "Good-night," and returned to watch by the couch of the injured man.

And Diana Featherstonehaugh, too, sought the rest she so much needed after the excitement of the day.

But before she slept, Isabel could not resist the opportunity of again reverting to a previous subject of conversation, and as delicately as she could, plead for forbearance on the part of the brilliant and beautiful siren, her friend, towards Andrew Lorimer.

For, somehow, Isabel found it impossible to drive the forebodings of evil, looming in the future, from her mind.

Diana did not receive her words so pettishly and impatiently as before.

The fright of the news of her father's expected arrival, the fainting fit, and perhaps other reasons, all combined to soften her nature and render her more amenable to the gentle influence of Isabel.

The heiress of Featherstonehaugh listened

dreamily, with half closed eyes, to her friend's tender voice, and presently said with a sigh,

"Ah, well, Isabel, I don't doubt you are right; you always are; but you should not be too severe upon me—you should not take as serious every silly thing I say. You know how wayward and giddy I am. It is my nature, I suppose."

Isabel kissed her friend, and bidding her "Good-night," left her to her thoughts, sincerely hoping that Diana would really repent of her rash words, and forego her expressed purpose of fascinating and ensnaring the heart of the young doctor of Festonhaugh.

It may be asked, why was Isabel so deeply concerned at Diana's words? Might she not fairly put them down as idle boasting of a spoiled and vain girl?

She asked herself the question, but could not answer it in a manner at all satisfactory to herself.

She had a sort of inward consciousness that Diana would, if she chose to try, succeed in her cruel purpose.

Isabel was gifted with singular quickness of perception, and already she could see that Diana had some influence over Andrew Lorimer, and she knew from the previous life of Diana, short as it had been, that she possessed siren powers hard to resist.

And again it may be asked, what was Andrew Lorimer to her, that she should take so deep an interest in his welfare, and should be especially anxious to shield him from the dangerous fascinations of her dearest friend?

Again, she was not able to answer the question satisfactorily to herself.

She felt no shame, but only puzzled and fearful lest the respect and admiration for the character of the young surgeon, which she was satisfied was all she felt, should be misconstrued.

She was by no means what young ladies call in love with Andrew Lorimer, and proved it to her satisfaction by asking herself this question:

"Would she feel any anger, jealousy, disappointment, if she witnessed him wedded to another?"

In all truth and honour she answered conscientiously from her heart that she would not; that, on the contrary, she would feel rejoiced to see him united to one worthy of him.

But it must be borne in mind that Isabel Vanstone was not the first young lady in the world who, asking herself such a question, has been self-deceived.

Far be it from us to say such a thing, or to hint that young ladies are in the habit of beguiling themselves into a false security by thinking and persuading themselves they are heart whole.

It is usually the other way. Whatever might be the feelings of some tender-hearted maidens with regard to Andrew Lorimer, it is quite certain that she herself felt confident that she only admired and respected him as a good, noble-minded man.

That night the two young girls each went off to sleep, and their last thoughts, as the gates of Somnus enfolded their consciousness in oblivion, were of Andrew Lorimer, the young surgeon of Festonhaugh.

And what of the earnest, simple-hearted man

of science, this cheerful and noble toiler for the good of humanity?

Assiduously he tended his patient all through the night, filling up the intervals by studying, by the light of an oil lamp, at a distant part of the room.

And certain it is that a lovely phantom, an imagination-created vision of a young and lovely girl with bright fair hair and flashing blue eyes would arise before him, and drag back his thoughts from the mysteries of science and medicine, on which he strove to keep his attention fixed, to this old English hall and the heiress of Featherstonehaugh.

He grew angry with himself, and, laying down the book, paced slowly to and fro the room with gloom on his face not usually to be discovered there.

"I must come here no more," he said to himself; "no more. I feel as though warned by an unseen influence to beware of Diana Featherstonehaugh. But the nature of that strange feeling, which seems indeed a presentiment, a warning whispered to the soul by beings of the unseen world—who can say whether this unspoken but perceptible warning be for good or evil, from my guardian angel or some mocking sprite who takes delight in tormenting us poor mortals?"

And so passed the night—Andrew Lorimer watchful and uneasy in mind, till, at grey dawn, he roused up a sleepy groom, ordered his horse to be saddled, and rode off at a gallop to visit a patient miles away.

For Andrew was not one to neglect a poor sick woman to please any peeress in the land.

His patient was in a deep slumber, and the doctor knew he would sleep for hours.

“Let Miss Featherstonehaugh be informed,” he said, “that I have ridden over to Burton Hamlet to visit a patient, and will be back as soon as possible, probably ere she has had breakfast.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE MARQUIS OF MONTE-CERRO.

ANDREW LORIMER rode hard, as he always did; for though he was the last man to be guilty of cruelty to animals, yet when he was bound on a long ride to visit a patient, he did not spare horse flesh.

He himself kept two thoroughly good horses—not handsome, but strong, sound cobs—which he took especial care should be well-groomed and fed, to fit them for the sometimes severe work they had to do.

And, though it was a clear twenty miles from Featherstonchaugh Hall to Burton Hamlet, he accomplished the distance in two hours.

The clear fresh morning air, the pleasant exercise of riding at a rapid pace, the musical clatter of the horses' hoofs on the hard road, all had exhilarating effects. And, moreover, as he left the Haugh behind him, a load seemed to be taken off his heart—not all at once, but ounce by ounce, in proportion as he increased the distance between himself and the fair siren.

Arrived at his journey's end, a small thatched cottage, such as those inhabited by agricultural labourers, he drew rein, and dismounting, hooked the horses' bridle on the palings in the front, and entered.

Here on his mission of mercy we will, for a

space, leave him, and introduce to our readers other characters in our tale already spoken of—Luigi, Marquis of Monte-Cerro, amongst others, whose great mansions and estates adjoined those of the Montaignes close behind Featherstonehaugh.

It has already been said the Marquis had met and had been conquered by the lively and fascinating Diana Featherstonehaugh, and had decided that she should share his title and estates.

He waited but for the return of Colonel Featherstonehaugh to make the proposal in due form, and had little or no doubt as to the result; for, in a worldly point of view, the match would be a most desirable one for the Featherstonehaughs, for the broad lands of the Marquis overlapped both the estates of Colonel Featherstonehaugh and those of the Montaignes, besides being greater in extent than both put together.

In pursuance of his intention, the Marquis of Monte-Cerro indited a letter to Colonel Featherstonehaugh, addressed to his club in London, asking when he would be back at the Haugh, as he wished to consult him on a subject near his heart.

He received a reply promptly enough.

“White’s Club, St. James, London.

“MY LORD MARQUIS—I return home at once, and shall be at the Haugh, I hope, on Thursday, the end of this month. I need not say that I shall be most happy to receive you either for a long or a short visit. With my most distinguished consideration, My Lord Marquis, I am your most obedient servant,

“HECTOR FEATHERSTONEHAUGH.

“To the Lord Marquis of Monte-Cerro.”

This letter was delivered to the Marquis on the same day on which Diana received hers, announcing her father's return.

His Lordship, after reading this brief epistle, strolled out into the park which surrounded the mansion on all sides for many an acre.

"I must act, and act promptly and decisively," he said aloud: for now being alone in his own vast domain, he had no fear of being overheard. "Yes; I must get rid of this encumbrance at all hazards, at any price. Accursed fool that I was to bring the girl from Spain with me—fool to have let her know my name and rank, and doubly foolish to have hampered myself with herself and her wild lawless relatives. There is that brother of hers, Sebastian, a savage, and untamed spirit, if ever there was one in human shape, a very demon when roused. And the girl herself too—she is no turtle-dove, she is not one to be cast off easily, and yet it must be done; for though it matters not so long as I am a single man, though gallantries on the part of a married man are not treated as crimes amongst the English aristocracy, still neither the proud colonel nor his daughter would brook my mistress living within the park gates, almost within sight of the window. No, she must be got rid of. I must send her to London, provide a lodging for her and her crew, and make an ample quarterly allowance; or I must give to her and her people a lump sum down, on condition of their returning to Spain. Yes, I will see about it at once—at once!"

The Marquis walked rapidly on towards a large hut or cottage near the park palings.

It had been formerly occupied by the master of

the kennels, but was now used for a very different purpose.

"But suppose she should refuse all my offers?" the Marquis went on muttering to himself. "What then?"

He paused for a moment to frame a reply to his own question.

"Why then," he said, "they must be removed by the strong arm of the law. I can leave word with Solomon Knagg, the attorney of Winchester, to have them removed from the county as rogues and vagabonds, and especially prevented from prowling about, or trespassing on my estates; and if a month or two in the county jail did not cool their ardour, why then—then I would exert my influence—the boundless influence of wealth—to have them kindly put on board ship, and transported to their native land. Yes, yes, my course is clear enough—it is all quite simple; and yet," he added moodily, "there is something about the girl I do not quite like. Hers is a strange wild nature. At times I think there lurks insanity behind those flashing black eyes. Of a fierce ungovernable temper, she would stand at nought. And yet I must subdue her to my will, by fair means or foul, for I am no child. Yes, by fair means or foul."

While thus soliloquising, the Marquis had arrived at the keepers' hut.

It was a square building of wood, roofed with moss-covered thatch, and surrounded by a railed garden. The latter, though it had obviously once been tended and kept in order, now showed all the signs of utter neglect. The little gravel paths once so neat and tidy, were overgrown with grass, and the beds were covered with a rank

vegetation, instead of the sweet flowers which one time bloomed there.

It would certainly seem that the present occupant of the cottage had no taste for such simple rural delights as a garden and flowers.

Monte-Cerro passed through the wicket, along the grass grown path, and knocked sharply at the door with the handle of his riding whip.

It was opened by a young man whose garb and whole appearance at once denoted a foreigner.

His hair was of a jet black colour, and being allowed to grow long, fell over his shoulders. His complexion of a deep olive, and large dark eyes, bespoke him a native of the sunny south.

His features were perfectly regular, even handsome, and when he spoke a set of dazzling white teeth were revealed. There was, however, a sullen moody expression about the young man's face, a fierce wild look about the eyes, which denoted no gentle nature.

The Marquis did not seem well pleased to find himself face to face with the young man.

"Ah, Sebastian," he said, in the Italian tongue, "is that you? Where is your sister?"

"Maddalena has gone up to the house."

"Up to the house? The devil she has. What has she gone there for?" cried the Marquis in angry tones.

"What has she gone there for you ask?" retorted the other quite as sharply—"to see you. Who has a better right there than your wife, Marquis Monte-Cerro?"

The Marquis made an angry gesture and replied:

"Bah! what is the use of talking in that way? Such a thing can never be acknowledged in England."

"And why not?"

"Because the English law does not recognise such a marriage."

"You dare tell me that my sister is not your wife—that you were not married by the priest of Salerno, with my brother Andrea for witness?"

The young man's eyes flashed fire. His features bore an expression of desperate passion, and his right hand sought the hilt of a poniard in his girdle.

The Italian noble was evidently in considerable fear of his hot-blooded countryman, and now sought to pacify him.

"Come, come, Sebastian, do not be foolish and excite yourself without reason."

"Without reason! When my sister is in question? *Corpo di Bacco!* If I thought—come, my lord Marquis, let us have no trifling: either Maddalena is your wife, or she is not. Answer me: which is it?"

And, as he spoke, the young man half drew his dagger from its sheath.

The Marquis was unarmed, and even had it been otherwise, he would not have cared to risk an encounter with the fierce young Italian.

"Of course—of course, I know as well as you, that I wedded your sister at Salerno; but the laws of these cold-blooded islanders are not ours. It is no fault of mine that the English law will not acknowledge such a marriage as ours."

"What was there wrong or insufficient about it?"

"I am an English subject—born in England though Italian in feeling, in nature, in everything but the name, and we should have been married at the British Embassy."

"Well, why cannot the mistake be rectified

now?" asked the young man sternly. "What is there to prevent it?—you are both in England."

"It would be ruin to me to do such a thing—indeed it would be impossible. Shortly I hope to return to our own bright Italy, where I have made all necessary arrangements. You can precede me—you and Maddalena—and I will follow, and then all will be well."

"Ah! Italy! Italy! Land of sunny skies and perpetual summer, how I long to tread your shores once again! How I hate this dreary, cold, damp and foggy England!"

"Ah, you wish to return to Italy?"

"I would go to-morrow, had I but the money to buy or lease another vineyard in place of the one I gave up to follow the fortunes of Maddalena—that is, if I were assured Maddalena were safe—that she would have no need of me for a protector."

"You may make yourself easy on that score. Maddalena does not reciprocate the interest you take. It is little she cares or thinks of you, I can assure you."

"How know you that? What authority have you so to speak?"

"Certain knowledge?"

"Give me some proof."

"Have you any money?"

"No."

"Does not Maddalena supply you from sisterly love?"

"I asked her this morning. She said she had none."

"Yesterday I gave her fifty guineas."

Sebastian gave vent to a cry of rage.

"Ah, the false jade! Is it thus she repays me

for the sacrifice I have made for her sake, in leaving my vineyard and my country—our beautiful Italy—to cross the sea, and come to this dull dismal land? Ah, ungrateful girl! you may yet learn to know what it is to want a brother's protection."

The Marquis had now excited the ire of the fiery young Italian, and he did not fail to incense him further against his sister.

"Yes, my good Sebastian, it is but small regard she can have for you. What shall we say of a sister who betrays a brother's secret—a secret which might lead him to the galleys?"

"What mean you? Speak out my, Lord," said the young man turning deadly pale.

"I will. You remember four years ago, when you did not rent a vineyard of your own?"

"I do."

"You lived in Caserta Vecchia near Naples."

"That is true."

"You were missing for some two months and none knew whither you had gone *at the time*."

"It was no affair of any one's. I had a right to go whither I pleased."

"You had scarcely a right, in the *eyes of the authorities*, to join the band of the brigand chief Black Pedro!"

"Ha! how knew you that?"

"From Maddalena." replied the Marquis quietly.

"Ah! accursed traitoress! Dared she betray me? I can scarcely believe it. It cannot be true."

"Do as you like about believing," said the Marquis quietly. "I will, however, ask you one question. If she did not tell me, how else could I gain that—and further information?"

"True," replied Sebastian, moodily, "too true. What else has she said?"

"Much, and hinted at more."

"Ah!"

"You remember two years back, when in an attack on a party of travellers, a priest who was among them was killed, and some silver candlesticks for the chapel at Sancta Maria stolen? The affair created so much excitement, horror and indignation, that the brigand band were forced to break up and disperse. Whose was the hand which slew the priest? Can you answer me, Sebastian?"

The young man turned deadly pale, and replied not.

"Maddalena knows, or thinks she knows, and does not care to disguise her opinion."

Sebastian was now deadly pale.

"It is enough," he said, in a hoarse voice. "I have heard enough. Never more will I own her as a sister of mine. She has betrayed me. My curse on her! May she in turn be betrayed! Ah! if I had but the money, I would leave her to her fate—leave her to her own resources—to battle, single-handed, against you, my lord Marquis."

He said these last words with a strange smile on his swarthy features, which seemed to denote that he knew more than his words expressed.

The Marquis coloured slightly

"To battle with me! what nonsense! I wish Maddalena no harm. I am her friend. Can you doubt my affection for her?"

"It is possible there may still remain in your breast some lingering affection, my Lord: but we are not blind or foolish. Think

you that Maddalena does not know that you cast your eyes elsewhere ? ”

“ Elsewhere ! What mean you ? ”

“ I mean that fair English wax doll—Diana Featherstonehaugh—who in beauty can no more compare with my sister than a taper with the noonday sun.”

The Marquis was utterly confounded, and stammered forth, “ What madness ! Where got you that idea ? ”

“ From Maddalena. Ah, my Lord, you little know the nature of a jealous woman, if you suppose that you can act or write, I had almost said *think*, without her knowledge.”

“ *Write*. Ah ! I see. Maddalena has played the part of a spy, and ransacked my private desk—has read my letters and papers. Ah ! the traitoress, she shall be forbidden the hall.”

“ Yes, traitoress indeed,” cried Sebastian, suddenly remembering his own wrongs, real or fancied. “ What can you expect of a girl who betrays her own brother ? ”

The Marquis paced up and down rapidly two or three times, evidently deeply annoyed.

“ And now I will tell you something, my Lord.”

“ Speak.”

“ Maddalena has never forgiven you for what she considers your desertion of her, when she was falsely accused of murder.”

“ I was abroad and knew nought of it.”

“ You were wilfully ignorant, and she knew it.”

“ But for the young surgeon of Festonhaugh, who by his evidence saved her, she would have swung on the gallows tree. The belief that you purposely deserted her rankles in her heart, and some day she will seek her revenge.”

The Marquis was now very pale, and there was a strange hard stern look on his handsome features.

"Thanks, good Sebastian, I will be on my guard against her. As you rightly say, what can be expected of a girl who betrays her own brother—perhaps to the galleys or to death?"

Again Sebastian's fury blazed up and gave vent to a volume of anathemas against his sister.

The Marquis, who kept his object steadily in view, now said, "And if you had money you would return to Italy, and leave Maddalena to her"—*to her fate*, he was about to say, but stopped himself in time—"to her own resources?"

"Ah, that would I, right willingly."

"What sum should you require?"

The young man darted a keen glance at him from beneath his eyelids, and with quick perception saw that though Monte-Cerro tried to appear indifferent and at his ease, he was really very anxious.

"Ah," thought Sebastian, "he wants to get rid of me. Good—it so happens that I wish to go. He must open his purse strings liberally.—In order to purchase a vineyard, furnish a house, and do all things necessary to place myself in the same position which I gave up for you and Maddalena, I should require three thousand ducats—between 500 and 600 what you call guineas."

The Marquis, although he was by no means surprised or alarmed at Sebastian's demand, but on the contrary, willing to pay it, was careful not to evince too great eagerness.

Sebastian watched him keenly, but slyly.

"Ah! your Lordship thinks it is too much," he said.

"It is a large sum certainly—a very large sum. Should you require it at once?"

"The sooner the better."

"H—m! Well, I will manage it for you: but you must come over with me to Winchester—I must call at the bank there."

"Very good."

"You can, if you please, accompany me now?"

"Yes."

"And there is the mail coach which leaves for London this afternoon. You can go by it if you like, and thence ship for Italy."

"Yes," replied the young man, "that will suit me. I am at your service."

The Marquis seeing one of the men-servants crossing the park, called to him.

When the man came up and respectfully touched his hat, the Marquis said,

"Make haste to the stables and order Jervis to bring round the curricule and pair to the lodge gates at once."

"Yes, my Lord."

In a quarter of an hour the Marquis of Monte-Cerro and Sebastian were seated in his Lordship's curricule behind two fast trotting horses. "And what of Maddalena?" asked the brother, with perhaps a slight feeling of remorse. "She has gone up to the Hall to see you and is waiting—"

"Let her wait," was the short reply.

"She will wonder what has become of me, when she finds I do not return."

"I will inform her that you have gone back to Italy, if you wish it."

"It is no matter. She is a false traitoress. I leave her to herself and to *you*, my Lord Marquis."

There was a certain satirical signification in the young man's voice which Monte-Cerro did not quite like.

"You need be under no apprehension," he said, coldly, "she is in good hands. She will be well looked after."

"Doubtless, I wish her joy. Perhaps, ere long, she will regret having offended her brother Sebastian."

The Marquis made no reply.

Everything had gone exactly as he could have wished it ; and though he appeared calm and unconcerned, he was really in high glee at the prospect of getting rid of the fiery and dangerous young Italian brother of his mistress, even at the price of over five hundred pounds.

That afternoon, the young man started in the coach for London with five hundred and fifty pounds in Bank of England notes and gold in his purse.

And two days later, he sailed from London to Naples, and the girl Maddalena found herself in a strange land, without kith or kin or friend in the world, save and except his lordship of Monte-Cerro, whom she called husband, but who, on his part, would by no means acknowledge such a relationship.

CHAPTER XV

HOW THE MARQUIS OF MONTE-CERRO GAINED
THE LOVE OF MADDALENA FERRIATO.

A FEW words explaining the relations of the persons introduced in the last chapter to one another will here be acceptable.

It has been before stated that the Marquis Monte-Cerro, though inheriting a foreign title, was born in England, and was thus an English subject.

Had it not been so, he could not have possessed freehold estates in the United Kingdom.

He was brought up from infancy to boyhood in Italy, and then sent to England for his education.

At the age of eighteen he returned to Italy where, as the guest of his brother, a small Italian prince, or in travelling about, he spent the greater portion of his time, until he was thirty years of age.

It happened that in Rome he saw and fell desperately in love with an exceedingly beautiful girl of the Neapolitan province.

At the time she was earning liberal payment by sitting as a model to a painter.

And of a surety neither painter nor sculptor could ever hope, or even wish for, a more glorious specimen of female beauty of the true southern type than Maddalena Ferriato presented.

Artistically speaking, she was perfect.

Hair and eyes darker than the raven's plume; oval face, with nose and forehead of the purest classic type; magnificently arched eyebrows; a head perfect in shape, gracefully placed over shoulders and breast faultless in outlines, Maddalena was, by all artists and art critics, acknowledged as the handsomest woman in Rome.

The Marquis of Monte-Cerro saw this splendid beauty, and, as was the case with many others, fell desperately in love, and vehemently urged his suit.

Wealthy and noble, it might be thought that he would find no great difficulty in overcoming the scruples of a girl who, though ravishingly beautiful, was of humble birth.

But if such was his Lordship's opinion, he, like many others, found out his mistake.

Maddalena was as proud as she was lovely, and treated with good-humoured contempt all the butterflies who fluttered about her.

Morals in Italy were never at a high pitch, and it was scarcely thought a disgrace for a woman to be the avowed mistress of a wealthy nobleman.

But soon Monte-Cerro, a man of quick perception, discovered that there was no chance of storming the citadel in such a rough manner.

He found that Maddalena Ferriato was both chaste and proud.

The expression of her mouth, the haughty curve of the upper lip, the glances of withering scorn she could bestow—these and other things convinced him that the fortress could only be taken by stratagem, or, in plainer words, by treachery.

And so he wooed her persistently, and with deep craft.

Unlike most others of her suitors, who in their very flatteries and sham obsequiousness betrayed the fact that they had no high opinion of her, Monte-Cerro treated her with the most studied respect.

And so, by slow degrees, by his manner and conduct, he led her to believe that his intentions were strictly honourable.

He treated her lowly birth, when she sometimes, with proud humility, spoke of it, as a matter of no importance, and mentioned instances of many ladies of Italy and other countries, now noble by marriage, whose origin was as humble as hers.

Gradually all this quiet deference and respectful affection began to tell on the heart of the young model ; for, be it observed, the Marquis was not only rich and noble, but also an extremely handsome man, and had, moreover, a winning, seductive manner.

And so it came about that Maddalena fell more than half in love with her noble suitor.

The time came when she was to return to her father's farm near by Salerno, in the province of Naples.

And thither, with her permission, and even by arrangement, he followed her, taking up his quarters in a lovely villa he hired on the shores of the Bay of Palermo.

At his request, Maddalena brought her brother Sebastian there, and introduced him to her noble suitor.

The Marquis was lavish with money, but found it extremely difficult to deal with this brother, who was of a violent and ungovernable temper.

Moreover, from the first he conceived a dislike

for, and harboured suspicions of, the Marquis's intentions towards Maddalena.

However, not without great trouble, Monte-Cerro overcame the young man's dislike of him by simply ignoring it; and as regarding his suspicions, he intrusted the lulling of these to his sister, to whom he avowed an honourable passion.

In fact, he proposed to marry her; and the girl, half-loving him—dazzled by the prospect of a brilliant future—readily consented.

From that time she suspected nothing, and trusted him entirely

She gave her heart fully and unreservedly, and nothing but bitter experience could have shaken her faith in the Marquis Luigi Monte-Cerro.

Though all Italy were to denounce him to her, and warn her that he meditated treachery, she would not have believed them.

And so, under the most favourable circumstances, the Marquis matured and carried into effect his treason.

It was an old trick, and one by which scores, nay hundreds, of innocent girls have been deceived—a false marriage.

His money easily procured him a false priest and false witnesses who, after the mock ceremony, were never to be seen or heard of again.

As for the brother, Monte-Cerro waited for a time when he was away for the consummation of his plot.

On the return of Sebastian, he was briefly informed by his sister that she was married to the Marquis, but that their union must, for the time, be kept a profound secret.

Sebastian and all relations received substantial

presents ; and the brother, though still suspicious, was somewhat quieted.

For a time things went smoothly enough. Monte-Cerro appeared to be passionately attached to the lovely Maddalena.

She was now attired in silks and velvets, and the services of the best modistes in Naples and Florence were called upon to drape the splendid figure of Maddalena Monte-Cerro.

After a time, however, as is usually the case, the passion of the Marquis cooled a little.

He still had some affection for the girl and was proud of her great beauty ; but she annoyed him by constantly urging him to acknowledge her openly as his wife.

This was far from his thoughts, and more than once, ere they had been six months together, angry words passed between them.

It was true that she travelled with him whom she supposed to be her husband, and was always acknowledged as madame the Marchioness.

But this, she knew, was the case with women who were notoriously but the mistresses of the men they travelled with.

It was not enough for Maddalena's proud spirit. She wished to be openly acknowledged, taken to court, and there introduced as his wife.

This the Marquis flatly refused, much to the indignation of Maddalena, in whose mind there now arose, for the first time, a faint shadow of suspicion.

Things grew slowly from bad to worse, and when she showed her discontent, the colder and sterner grew his Lordship towards her.

He still liked her, loved her even, in his own way ; and could she have been content to accept

her position as merely nominally his wife—really his mistress—their affairs would have gone on smoothly enough.

At last, worried by her continual solicitations, her tears, her reproaches, and fits of passion, the Marquis suddenly declared he must go to England to look after his estates there.

He promised to return as soon as possible, and, meanwhile, left her in possession of an ample income of a thousand ducats a month.

Thus he thought to get rid of her importunity, and through providing for her amply, liberally even, to read her a lesson.

In fact, he wished her gradually to understand that she was not really his wife, and that the ceremony they went through was merely a sort of priestly benediction on their lives.

He dared not tell her so openly and abruptly, for he had well-grounded fears of her passionate nature.

He felt certain that if he were at once and boldly to tell her that she was not his wife at all, that she would be as likely to kill him in her frenzy of passion as not.

And then there was the brother Sebastian, a most revengeful and vindictive, savage youth.

The Marquis looked at the situation, and felt that he dared not defy them.

And so he took his flight to England; but before he went he commenced to work out his plan of gradually getting rid of her, or, at all events, letting her understand her true position, by telling her that the reason he would not take her to England was because their marriage, though valid in Italy, was not so by the English law.

In due time he intended to let her discover that she was not legally married even by the Italian law.

And this he would do in a peculiarly crafty manner.

To inform her outright that he had deceived her was more than he dared. He feared the terrible outburst of passion which would ensue when she knew that she had been beguiled by a mock marriage, and had fallen a victim to a plot of which he was the author and prime mover.

No; my lord Marquis was wiser in his generation than this, and he meant to make her believe, or at all events try to do so, that he himself had been deceived, and that the man who performed the ceremony was not qualified or empowered to act as priest—that though he had been in holy orders, he was at the time suspended by his bishop, and subsequently driven in disgrace from the church.

His object in performing a ceremony, or administering a sacrament, for which he was not qualified, was obvious.

The wealth and liberality of the Marquis Monte-Cerro was well known, and it was not to be supposed that he would be stingy on the occasion of marriage.

In fact, it was understood that the priest who performed the ceremony would receive five hundred ducats, one-half of which the holy man was to retain for himself, the other to distribute amongst the poorer members of his flock.

Such was the tale the Marquis proposed to tell the girl he had beguiled into a mock marriage, hoping to convince her thus, that though not

legally his wife no blame rested with him; in fact, that they had both been deceived by a sham priest, who had since disappeared, and had never more been heard of.

The fact that there was something wrong, some irregularity with respect to her marriage, had just begun to dawn upon Maddalena's mind when the Marquis took his flight to England.

For a time she seemed bewildered, almost stupified.

Certain hints he had let fall several times of late prepared her for the terrible news conveyed to her in a letter, couched in the most tender and insidious terms, which he left her.

This document, and his sudden departure, opened her eyes partly to the nature of the man with whom she had to deal.

Thus ran the epistle:—

“MADDALENA CARRISSIMA, — Affairs of importance relating to my English estates demand my presence, and for a time I must bid farewell to you and sunny Italy, for the cold, bleak shores of England. I spare you and myself the pang of a parting interview. I mentioned to you the other day the fact that the priest who united us had absconded, and that for some ecclesiastical offence he had been forbidden to exercise any of the offices of our holy religion. Inquiries I have made go to show that the case is blacker, worse even than I thought. I fear, nay, I am assured on too good authority, that this crime (I can call it no less) of a disgraced priest will invalidate our marriage. You can imagine it is a great blow to me, and knowing your tender nature, I shrank from wounding your heart by giving you the disastrous intelligence

verbally During my absence you will receive one thousand ducats a month, and under any circumstances you may rely on the continued care and protection of yours, MONTE-CERRO."

This letter, despite its crafty and insidious wording, plunged the unhappy Maddalena into the depths of despair!

She gathered from it the terrible fact that she was not legally the wife of the Marquis. For days and weeks she remained passive, in a sort of gloomy apathy, brooding over her wrongs.

But suddenly she seemed to rouse herself, and summoning her brother Sebastian, announced her intention of following the Marquis to England.

"You will accompany me, Sebastian," she said. "It is necessary that you should. There is a doubt thrown on the legality of my marriage; and my honour and that of my family must be vindicated."

Maddalena was well supplied with money, for in that respect Monte-Cerro had always been liberal enough, and easily induced her brother to do as she wished.

The mode was a very simple one.

Sebastian, though a fiery-tempered, head-strong scapegrace, had been frequently in trouble, and now since his escapade of joining the brigands, was looked on with suspicion by the police, and disliked by his neighbours.

Through his sister's influence he was enabled to rent a vineyard, but, dissipated and reckless, he spent in riot and debauchery all the proceeds, was continually in debt, and, worse than all, had to appeal to Maddalena for money to pay the labourers, for he had even incurred the deep dis-

grace in Italian eyes of being unable to do so himself.

Sebastian willingly gave up the vineyard, and on his sister handing him two hundred ducats agreed to accompany her to England.

First, however, he must spend the money, and forthwith repaired to Naples, where, in a fortnight spent in the wildest debauchery and dissipation, he succeeded in so doing.

A second claim on his sister for more money was successful, but on a third application she refused, and Sebastian being without resources or credit, was forced to take ship with her for England.

It was fortunate that the vessel in which they sailed was bound for Southampton, which town was only some score of miles from the Hampshire estates of the Marquis.

Neither could speak a word of English, for Maddalena had always proudly disdained to acquire the slightest knowledge of the language, although Monte-Cerro was by birth a British subject, and derived the greater portion of his immense revenue from his English estates.

Great was the astonishment and fury of the Marquis on hearing of the appearance of the brother and sister at his mansion.

He was away in London at the time, and during his absence, and without authority, the steward left in charge refused to accommodate the strangers in the Hall.

And, indeed, he could scarcely make out who or what they were ; for, as before said, neither could speak English, and an Italian sailor who accompanied them as interpreter could do little better.

Repulsed from the great house of which she considered herself rightfully mistress, Maddalena

and her brother were forced to betake themselves to the inn at the little village of Festonhaugh, distant some miles.

Here, worn out by fatigue and mental anxiety, the beautiful Italian was stricken with fever.

Andrew Lorimer was called in to attend on her, and to make her acquaintance.

Under his skilful care she soon got over the crisis of the malady. The fever, however, left her in a deplorable state of weakness. All energy, mental and bodily, seemed to have deserted her, and, yearning for human sympathy, she imparted the tale of her wrongs to the young doctor.

Andrew Lorimer was possessed of sound judgment, although he had little experience of the wiles and wickedness of the great world, and at once came to the conclusion that she had been wilfully deceived by her noble lover, and that he was the author and instigator of the plot by which a sham marriage was celebrated by a sham priest.

He did not tell her so much in words, for he shrank from inflicting greater mental pain on the unhappy Italian, who still clung to the belief that if she were not legally married, it was no fault of him whom she believed to be her husband, and whom she still loved passionately, despite his coolness towards her.

Andrew Lorimer advised her to keep quiet, and by all means in her power assure herself of the affection of the Marquis. And, as there was a doubt—more than a doubt—as to the validity of her marriage, to win him back by gentle means, by the soft influence of a love awakened by her own tenderness and gentleness, to induce

him to have the ceremony legally performed in England, the land of his birth.

Maddalena--weak in health, a stranger in a foreign land, crushed and broken in spirit--yielded to the doctor's advice ; and when on the return of the Marquis he visited her, prepared for a stormy interview, a scene of wild reproaches and fierce threats, he found her, to his astonishment, docile, gentle, tender, and loving.

The illness had not marred her beauty, and for a time at least, the flame of renewed affection burned in the breast of Monte-Cerro.

But beneath the placid surface there lay a hidden mine--a dormant volcano.

Maddalena scarce knew it herself, but it wanted but a spark of jealousy to fire the charge.

She would brook, and, for his sake, would submit to his hard terms, that their marriage must, for the present, remain a secret.

But a rival--never !

Should such an one appear on the scene, then would boil over her hot Italian blood.

For the present, she suspected nothing of the kind ; and, following the advice of the kind-hearted young surgeon, she determined to secure the love of the man whom she regarded as her husband.

And to this end she set about learning the English language, which Monte-Cerro himself spoke better than Italian.

"I am beautiful, I know," she said. "I am not ignorant if not brilliantly accomplished. When I can speak this hard, cold English tongue then he will look upon me as worthy to share his rank, to be introduced to the world as the Marchioness of Monte-Cerro."

And this fond hope she cherished, and was for a time happy in spite of the strange and anomalous circumstances under which she found herself placed, circumstances which shall be more fully explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAD MARCHIONESS.

MONTE-CERRO, taking advantage of the bodily and mental weakness of Maddalena, was able to speak openly and with little fear of consequences—propose a course of action by which he hoped gradually to accustom Maddalena to her true position as his mistress, solely dependent on his pleasure.

He set about it in a manner as insidious and as delicate as he could devise.

First, he explained to her by the English law, their marriage could in no shape or form be recognised.

And next, that for political and other reasons of vital importance, it was necessary that even the fact of his Italian marriage—though that was probably invalid by reason of the priest's deception—should be kept strictly secret.

To these conditions Maddalena sorrowfully consented.

“And, of course, as there is this necessity for secrecy, it would not be consistent for you to take up your abode at the Hall.”

This he said with some doubt as to how it would be received.

She looked in his face, her large dark eyes filling with tears.

“Do you mean that you wish to send me away

from you, Luigi—that I am not to see you—that not only my husband will not acknowledge me before the world, but banishes me from his sight?”

Through the blinding tears which dimmed those magnificent eyes, Monte-Cerro discerned a smouldering fire—an angry light—and felt that he must not go too far.

He was silent for a moment, obviously embarrassed how to act.

And then all at once a happy idea struck him—at least, he thought it was a happy idea—and immediately proceeded to act upon it.

“No, my dear Maddalena; such a thing is, I assure you, far from my thoughts. It was painful enough to be obliged to leave you, and, now that you have braved the stormy seas to rejoin me, it is not likely I should be willing to lose your society. No, Maddalena, though not actually living at the Hall, you shall be close by within the park, and there is a small cottage which I will at once have properly furnished and decorated for your accommodation. There is ample accommodation for yourself and servant. The cottage is divided into two parts by a passage, which runs through the middle. On one side there are two sleeping chambers and a small sitting-room, on the other, a servant’s room and kitchen. I shall consider it as much my home as the Hall, and shall often gladly flee from noisy friends and company, and taste the sweets of youth and your society, sweet Maddalena. As for Sebastian, I will see that he is properly accommodated, as is fit for the brother of my wife.”

This speech, and the manner in which it was spoken, was admirably qualified to win the consent of Maddalena.

She saw that, in the light he put it, it was impossible for her to reside at the Hall, and eagerly embraced the idea of living in a quiet, secluded cottage, where she would have him all to herself.

And, poor child! she persuaded herself that she would so win back the truant love—if indeed it had ever really taken flight, which she scarcely believed—that he would spend nearly all his time with her in the cottage, and in time find her a necessity to him, so that when she again asked him to marry her according to English law, and acknowledge her as his wife, he would be unable to refuse her.

And, cherishing this fond dream, Maddalena agreed to all which her deceiver proposed.

As he promised, the cottage was elegantly furnished, and, so far as its size would permit, made fit for the reception of any lady in the land.

Monte-Cerro himself provided an old woman, on whose discretion he could depend, to act as servant, and provided Sebastian with suitable accommodation a short distance from the park gates, himself guaranteeing payment for all debts the young Italian might incur for lodging and board.

And for a time all went merry as a marriage bell.

Sebastian was content with an indolent life, his sister supplying him with money, for the Marquis did not stint her in this respect.

The only stipulation he made was that Sebastian was never, on any pretext, to come to the Hall.

Maddalena consented, and was able to enforce this, holding the purse strings as she did.

And so time passed on—days, weeks, and months.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MEETING IN THE PARK.

OF course the fact of the Marquis of Monte-Cerro having a beautiful Italian mistress living in a cottage within the park could not be a secret, and no one ever dreamed of supposing that the dark-eyed beauty was his wife.

Morals were loose enough in those days, and amongst the men of the higher classes Monte-Cerro suffered nothing in reputation.

But with the women it was different. The wealthy nobleman found that none of the ladies of the county families would visit him.

He could not give a ball, an assembly, a mere dinner party, except a bachelor one.

At this he chafed and fumed, but found himself powerless to act.

And so his manner grew cooler and cooler towards Maddalena, whose presence in the cottage placed him under a sort of ban, so far as the wives and daughters of the county aristocracy were concerned.

His visits grew less frequent, his language harsh, and gradually, bit by bit, day by day, he drove the truth home to the heart of the loving, confiding girl that she was but his mistress, and need hope for no better position.

Heart broken and humiliated, the poor girl still loved him, and with many tears and hours

of mental agony, schooled herself to accept her fate, sad and dishonoured as it was.

So long as he was true to her, she could forgive all besides, though with aching heart and much bitter self-reproach.

But a rival! Ah! could such a thing be? Then would her nature be roused to sudden fury—then would her hot Italian blood assert itself.

She had thought of this last misery, and prayed it might never come.

But there was a sad foreboding at her heart—an inward presentiment that the worst had not yet arrived.

Maddalena was very quick and intelligent, and quickly picked up the English tongue.

And by degrees, as she was able to understand remarks made to her and of her, yet another weight was laid on her already over-burdened mind.

Neglected by Monte-Cerro, whom for days together she did not see, her spirit growing restless, she could not content herself with the seclusion of the cottage.

Tabooed from the society of her husband's equals, she sought companionship and sympathy in a lowlier sphere.

Sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback (for the Marquis, though personally he almost entirely neglected her, left her no reason to complain on the ground of niggardliness), she roamed the country round, making friends and acquaintances with the farmers, the trades folk, and the poor people of the neighbourhood.

And as her knowledge of English improved, she could not but hear many remarks which made her blood boil and her cheeks tingle with indigna-

tion, for she found she was usually spoken of as the marquis's Italian mistress.

This, however, she could not and would not brook, and, throwing to the wind his injunctions as to the necessity of secrecy, proclaimed herself as his legal wife, and by right Marchioness of Monte-Cerro.

People listened, looked, and wondered.

Of late, and since the deliberate coolness and neglect of Monte-Cerro, she had awakened from the apathy to which she seemed to have resigned herself, and the old proud, haughty spirit again flashed forth in the dark eyes.

She grew restless and excitable, flew frequently into a violent passion, muttered to herself, wept hysterically at times, and altogether exhibited an almost total change of nature, or rather a relapse from her submissiveness to her original fiery temper.

But there were not wanting symptoms that her mind was unequal to the strain cast upon her.

There were signs that her haughty spirit and temper were too strong for her reason, and at times the fell demon, insanity, touched her with terrible but fantastic claw.

And so, in the course of her ramblings she became known.

The poor people loved and revered the beautiful Italian lady, so profuse in her bounty, with a kind word for all.

But, noting her excitable manner, her large black eyes, from whose depths there often flashed up suddenly a strange light; hearing her words spoken in broken English, they called her the mad Marchioness.

And as such was the unfortunate Maddalcna Ferriato known, far and wide, at the time when our story opens.

This change in the mood of Maddalena was a source of great trouble to the Marquis.

He had hoped, by allowing her indulgence, to school her into such a state of mind that she would quietly, if not cheerfully, accept her position.

And so, perhaps, she might but for his own fault.

She might have endured her anomalous position—indeed, she had almost reconciled herself to the humiliating fact that she was no wife—could she have felt assured of his love.

But that for her was impossible.

She seldom saw him, and when she did, any advances on her part were as often as not met with impatience and sharp words.

She had heard, too—ah! how bitterly did she feel this—that he spake lightly of her, and on one occasion after a bachelor's dinner party put her up to be raffled for by his dissolute friends, a young squire in the neighbourhood, Gilbert Hazlewood by name, carrying off the prize.

And now we come to a tragedy.

This young fellow had seen Maddalena, and had been deeply smitten by her beauty.

More than once he had accosted her, and she had replied to him, knowing him to be a friend of Monte-Cerro, treating him, however, with as much coolness as possible.

Maddalena was an early riser, and more than once ere Monte-Cerro and his dissolute companions had concluded an orgie, protracted till long after daylight, she would be wandering in the park in

the bright morning sun, for Maddalena slept but lightly.

It happened that some two hours after sunrise one morning, after a night spent with boon companions at the Hall, Gilbert Hazlewood, riding homeward through the park, came across Maddalena.

His bloodshot eyes, flushed face, and his swaying to and fro in the saddle proclaimed that he was the worse for liquor, and she strove to avoid him.

But where he met her was in a narrow path through the plantation, and, with the impetuosity of drunkenness, he threw himself from the saddle, nearly falling as he did so; and, after rudely accosting her, seized and grossly insulted her.

Maddalena carried in her bosom a little silver-handled poniard, and with lightning quickness she drew it and inflicted a wound on Hazlewood, which caused him to release his hold of her with a cry of pain.

"You have murdered me!" he cried; "you shall hang for this."

"You have met your deserts," she screamed, passionately. "Begone—away out of this, and get some surgeon to patch up your wretched cowardly carcase. Away, I say, ere I complete the work I have commenced."

He was bleeding pretty freely, and with difficulty remounting his horse, rode away, cursing her in the bitterest terms as he did so.

A few hours afterwards he was found insensible, dying in fact, close to the park palings.

In his last delirium he spoke of Maddalena, cursed her as his murderess, and otherwise indicated that it was she who had done the deed.

Now, although when he spoke these words, which clearly pointed to her, he was delirious, they were thought sufficient to warrant her arrest.

The poniard, stained with blood, was found upon her, and at once, by common accord, she was proclaimed guilty, and committed for trial.

She did not deny the fact that she used her stiletto against Gilbert Hazlewood, but pleaded in justification that he first assaulted her, and that she had only acted in self-defence.

Only imperfectly acquainted with the language, and with no friend to advise her at the preliminary examination before the magistrates, Maddalena stood at a terrible disadvantage.

It was proved that when the body was found there was a severe wound on the head besides the poniard stab on the shoulder, which was supposed to be the cause of death. And, moreover, the unfortunate young man had been robbed. His watch and chain were gone, and his pockets rifled.

Now Maddalena, through her ignorance of the language, was not aware of this fact, or she would have pleaded the extreme improbability of her committing robbery, as she was amply supplied with money.

Had she been provided with counsel his defence would have been obvious—that it was perfectly true she had defended herself with a stiletto, which, after the manner of her country, she carried, when assaulted by the deceased, but that he did not meet his death from the slight wound she had inflicted. That, after leaving her, he had been waylaid, set upon, and murdered by robbers, who, seeing a drunken man on horseback, did not fail to take advantage of the opportunity.

But she had no one to urge such a plea in her favour.

Public opinion, except among the poorest, was strongly against her, and she was committed for trial at the approaching assizes for wilful murder.

As for my Lord Marquis of Monte-Cerro, he had disappeared on the very day of her arrest, leaving word that he was compelled to go over to Paris.

By this step he was enabled to plead ignorance of the tragedy until after she had been committed for trial.

And when in a letter full of passion and reproach she informed him of her position, he wrote back a calm, cool note, making light of the whole affair, assuring her that she would certainly be acquitted, and sent her a bank note for a hundred pounds.

She tore up the note and scattered the pieces about her prison cell, for it was not money she wanted, but sympathy, consolation, and help in this hour of affliction.

But from the Marquis she got none.

Although he professed in his brief note to look upon her acquittal as a certainty, and the trial a mere form, such was not really his view.

He had been furnished with the fullest particulars of the tragedy, and the feeling of the gentry and the magistrates on the subject.

He learned that public opinion was dead against her, and that she would almost certainly be convicted of manslaughter, if she escaped the charge of wilful murder.

The best plea would be insanity, and then she would be imprisoned during the king's pleasure

in a madhouse—a consummation that would suit Monte-Cerro admirably.

But, though deserted by the heartless, selfish man who had wronged her, and left in a foreign country to struggle against evidence which on the first blush seemed terribly conclusive against her, there was one man who, when he heard of her desolate, unprotected situation, came to her aid.

And this was Andrew Lorimer, the young surgeon of Festonhaugh.

Of course he had heard of the tragedy, but did not suppose that this unhappy Italian lady, with a very imperfect knowledge of the English tongue, none whatever of English law, would be left to struggle against and confute the terrible accusation without the aid of counsel or even the advice of a friend.

So, soon as he was made aware of this, he sought and obtained permission for an interview with her.

He asked her to tell him the whole and exact truth from beginning to end, which she did, willingly, only too glad, poor girl, to find someone to sympathise with her.

Andrew Lorimer believed her simple, straightforward story, and resolved to save her if possible.

This interview took place in the afternoon, in the jail of the county town to which she had been committed.

The coroner's inquest had been held that very morning, and after a very brief examination a verdict of wilful murder was returned against her.

Andrew Lorimer made inquiries, and was annoyed, astonished even, when he learned that

there had been no *post-mortem* held upon the body.

He at once decided how to act ; and, waiting upon the coroner, demanded that a *post-mortem* examination should be made by himself and another medical man, the coroner himself being present.

It was too late, so far as the jury were concerned, for the verdict had been given ; but the result of the examination by the two surgeons could be given in evidence at the trial.

The coroner, though conscious that he had failed in his duty, refused to comply with our friend's request, after the fashion of obstinate, narrow-minded men, who, having made an error, will often commit a crime rather than acknowledge it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A TRYING ORDEAL.

ANDREW LORIMER, though but a young country surgeon, without either wealth or influence, knew how to deal with such a man as the coroner, and soon let him understand that he had been guilty of a grave dereliction of duty already, and that by persisting in his refusal he would lay himself open to a criminal charge—possibly one of conspiracy—to procure the conviction of an innocent woman.

And so the coroner, with an ill grace, gave his order, and the post-mortem examination was duly made by Andrew Lorimer and another surgeon.

The result was as the young doctor anticipated.

The dagger wound in the shoulder, though it was doubtless painful, could not, by any possibility, have caused death.

No artery or important vein had been injured, and it was in fact nothing more than a flesh wound.

Further examination, however, disclosed the cause of death—a bad fracture of the skull. This might have been occasioned by a blow from a blunt instrument or by a heavy fall.

Now as the unfortunate man was decidedly intoxicated when he left the Hall, it was possible he may have lost control over his horse which ran

away with him and threw him from the saddle near the park palings.

As for the robbery, that might be accounted for by supposing that the dead body was discovered by tramps, gipsies, or poachers, and that, seeing it was that of a well-dressed gentleman, they proceeded to overhaul and rifle his pockets.

This was one theory as to how Gilbert Hazlewood met his death.

It was possible, also, that he might have been attacked by footpads, unawares, and killed by a blow from a bludgeon.

This was another theory.

But it was not possible that he could have died from the flesh wound inflicted by Maddalena's little dagger.

Besides, there was the fractured skull, the clear and undoubted cause of death.

And as to the delirious words of a dying man—a man who was drunk when he received his death injury, and that injury involving damage to the brain—no stress could be laid upon them whatever.

Thus there were two theories to account for the death of Gilbert Hazlewood, totally independent of Maddalena.

And on the other hand, there was clear and undoubted evidence that the dagger would not cause death.

Lorimer made all this clear to the coroner, who now began to see that he had made a very serious mistake.

He consented to take notes of the *post-mortem* examination, and promised to come up on the trial and substantiate the evidence of the two surgeons so far as he could.

In due course the trial came on, and everything looked as black as possible against the accused.

The coroner's jury had found a verdict of wilful murder, and the magistrates had unanimously decided on committing the prisoner.

There seemed nothing more wanting now than a verdict of guilty by the jury, and the condemnation of the accused to death or a life-long imprisonment.

Andrew Lorimer was late at the trial. He had a long way to ride over a bad road, and his horse suddenly falling lame caused the delay in his appearance.

But when he appeared in the witness box and gave his evidence, there was a sudden and total change in the feeling of all in court.

It now appeared absolutely certain that the deceased did not and could not have met his death at the hands of the accused.

Doctor Lorimer's evidence was fully corroborated by that of the other surgeon, and the coroner was forced to admit that the fracture in the skull, the real cause, was pointed out to him, and that it could only have been produced by a very terrible blow or fall.

Against this unexpected evidence the counsel for the crown had nothing to say, and after a very brief summing up by the judge, the jury returned a verdict of "Not guilty," and the dock was thrown open and Maddalena was free.

Free in body and safely through a terrible peril, thanks to Andrew Lorimer, but in mind sorely afflicted.

Her undeserved imprisonment, the failure of him to whom she had every right to look for support to come forward to aid, comfort, and

sustain her in this dark hour, sank deeply into her soul.

She returned to the cottage in the park and there shut herself up for many days in complete seclusion, brooding over her wrongs, dreaming no longer by love and gentle behaviour to win back her lord's affections.

Her thoughts were turned into quite another channel.

She would have justice—she would demand it as a right.

And failing to get it, why then there arose in her mind terrible thoughts of vengeance.

Monte-Cerro did not return for nearly a month after the trial.

On seeing her he endeavoured to make light of the whole business, letting her understand that he was in nowise bound to come over from Paris because "her own hot temper near got her into a scrape," as he expressed it.

This aroused the fierce anger of Maddalena, and a stormy scene ensued.

The Marquis lost his temper and his prudence, and openly telling her she was not and never could be his wife, ended by informing her that, when it suited him, he would bring home to the Hall a lady wife to share his rank and fortune and bear him an heir to his Italian title and English estates.

Maddalena was terrible in her rage, and though he had fully made his mind up to defy her as the only course now left him, he shrank aghast at the fury of the tempest he had raised.

Pale as death, her dark hair flowing in wild disorder over her shoulders, her eyes actually blazing with rage, an expression of the most desperate resolution on her features, she gave

utterance to a warning and a threat so deadly in its nature, and delivered in such a fierce, determined manner, that his heart quailed within him.

“Luigi, Marquis of Monte-Cerro, you deceived me with a mock marriage. Some day you shall repair that wrong. It may please heaven to soften your heart. Justice shall be done to me or you shall die. Aye! die a sudden death—be sent to the judgment seat of the Most High with all your sins upon your head. And as regards your threat of taking to yourself a wife, and so proclaiming me your cast-off mistress, and barring me from the possibility of justice by reparation—the day on which you attempt that will be your last. By our blessed Saviour and the Holy Mother in heaven, I swear that your life shall pay the penalty of treachery in that respect. Aye! even the attempt. So beware, my Lord Marquis of Monte-Cerro. You have to deal with a woman driven desperate by her wrongs. Again I say, beware!”

Monte-Cerro was staggered by so fierce a warning and sought to pacify her, but only partly succeeded.

As he left the cottage and walked slowly towards the Hall, he muttered to himself, “Something must be done with this tigress. By fair means or foul, she must be quieted. Even if she does no more, she may seriously interfere with my suit with Diana Featherstonehaugh. And Diana shall be my wife, though a score of Mad dalenas bar the way. The country people call her the mad marchioness. That suits me well. Her madness, real or fancied, shall be the means of ridding me of her presence for ever—*when the time comes.*”

CHAPTER XIX.

MONTE-CERRO SEEKS TO RID HIMSELF OF MAD-
DALENA.

ALTHOUGH the Marquis of Monte-Cerro was at the time greatly impressed and disquieted mentally by the impassioned denunciation and terrible threats of Maddalena, he by no means intended to give way to her, or allow her to rule his conduct.

He resolved to let things rest quietly for a while, and on the first favourable opportunity to get her safely out of his way.

Her manner was always wild and strange, and when excited her passionate nature burst all bounds of control, and she might easily be put down as mad.

He thought he would have but little trouble in getting a medical certificate of her insanity, when of course his plan would be very simple and easy.

He would have her sent to an asylum for the insane, and pay for her maintenance so liberally that there would be no danger of her ever being discharged as cured.

And to prove her mad he did not anticipate any difficulty.

For indeed did not the country folk around already commonly call her the mad Marchioness?

The Marquis thought, doubtless, that this was a very safe and cunning course of procedure and sure to be successful.

And so, probably, it must have been, supposing that Maddalena should prove docile and unsuspecting of his real intentions.

The Marquis was successful in getting rid of her brother, who, furnished with even more money than he demanded at first, left England for Italy.

Before going, he had an interview with his sister, and in answer to her reproaches, replied surlily that he was not going to spend his life in this accursed England, and that she had better return to her own country ere she got herself into further trouble.

Maddalena was proud, and as yet, though sorely wounded, her spirit was unbroken.

She bade him scornfully go, and turning her back on him, without even bidding him adieu, walked slowly up to the Hall, pondering deeply the while.

It was part of Monte-Cerro's plan now to treat her with civility—not to cross her in any way until after the departure of her brother. When this desirable result had been brought about, he could, he felt sure, at the proper time, so anger and excite her as to cause her to give way to her passion, and so act as to warrant in some measure the idea that she was mad. He was confident that he could find a medical man who would give the requisite certificate of insanity.

Accordingly, when she came up to the Hall, he at once gave her an interview.

"Well, Maddalena, how are you?" he asked. "You look gloomy and cast down; has anything annoyed you? Is there anything you want?"

She paid no heed to his question, but said abruptly,

"You gave my brother money to return to

Italy, to leave me alone at your mercy, as, doubtless, you think. But beware, my Lord! You wished to get rid of him. You gave him the money. Is it not so?"

"Certainly, Maddalena. I gave him the money at his own urgent request. He was continually fretting and fuming and urging on me his desire to return to Italy."

"Why did you give him the money?" she asked, fixing her brilliant dark eyes on his face.

His eyes fell before that earnest, searching gaze.

It seemed as though she read his thoughts, and he knew it.

"Why?" he replied; "because he asked me—worried me until I did."

Maddalena turned away and left him in the same manner she had her own brother—in silent scorn, without deigning a word.

This conduct on her part, which she maintained now, disquieted Monte-Cerro far more than passionate speeches and violent scenes could have done.

He began to fear that he had not the power of exciting her to a state of passionate frenzy at pleasure.

And that he should do so was necessary for his purpose—to declare her mad, and get the necessary certificate to that effect.

It would almost seem that she suspected his intentions, and was on her guard accordingly.

But such, he reasoned to himself, could hardly be the case, as he had taken no one whatever into his confidence.

After a time, seeing that her strange mood did not change, he himself altered his tactics.

Indeed, he felt personally piqued and annoyed by the cool, indifferent manner in which she behaved to him.

It would seem that on her part she had no longer any affection for him.

And yet she watched him carefully but closely, as he well knew.

This was more galling to his pride, and even touched him in a more tender way.

For Maddalena was very beautiful. He still had, if not genuine love for her, fits of passionate admiration.

At such times Maddalena would behave towards him with the most cool indifference, and more than once he found himself vainly playing the part of the lover.

"I am your wife," she would say, "it is true, and we are at present separated. When you choose to make atonement for your past neglect, and profess yourself ready and willing to acknowledge me as Marchioness of Monte-Cerro, then I may accord you my forgiveness and look upon you as I did in the old times when first you won my heart."

And so it came to pass that she gradually but surely gained an influence over the Marquis—yet not such as that which she exercised when he first made her acquaintance.

He no longer loved her, but persuaded himself that it was his interest to seem to do so.

And as is often the case, her coldness actually succeeded, after a time, in rousing up a feeling which, if not love, was akin to it.

CHAPTER XX.

LORIMER'S MEETING WITH MADDALENA.

THE altered manner of the Marquis of Monte-Cerro, after a time, seemed to affect Maddalena, and she at times seemed to melt in feeling towards the man to whom she had given her maiden heart.

It was now a course of sunshine, and clouds and storms, the latter predominating.

The Marquis, however, had, intentionally or not, so won her from her cold indifference, that again he was able to excite her to displays of jealous anger—a feeling which if it previously had place in her breast she was able to smother or conceal.

And so the days, weeks, and months, passed over, and affairs between Monte-Cerro and Maddalena—the deceiver and the betrayed—remained much as usual.

The Marquis, who had never relinquished his purpose of wedding Diana Featherstonehaugh, yet kept it strictly secret from Maddalena, at least for a time.

But the influence of the latter, not unmingled with fear, perhaps caused him to vacillate, procrastinate, and be very cautious to conceal from Diana his matrimonial designs on herself.

At last, however, the course of events caused him to take bolder action.

He heard of the advent of a rival on the scene

—a dangerous and powerful rival in the person of a Yorkshire baronet of great wealth and old family, a man of handsome person, and high in favour at court.

This was Sir Clyfford Clyffe, a friend of Colonel Featherstonehaugh.

The Marquis heard that Sir Clyfford was coming down with the Colonel to the Haugh, having gained his consent to urge his suit on the fair Diana.

So he determined that he too must at once appear in the field.

On this resolve he proceeded to act.

But it happened that Maddalena, ever watchful and suspicious got an inkling of what was brewing, and ere long had proof sufficient to cause a furious burst of jealous passion.

It was under these circumstances that Andrew Lorimer, going to visit his patient at the Haugh, encountered Maddalena on the road.

The young surgeon, riding along carelessly at a rapid pace, drew rein near the summit of the hill, where cross roads met.

As he reached the top, he saw approaching by one of these roads a female on horseback.

She came on at a canter, and very shortly he recognised the beautiful and unfortunate Italian girl, Maddalena, whom he had so well befriended.

He perceived she was greatly excited.

Her olive cheek was flushed, her splendid dark eyes sparkled with fire.

She at once addressed him, speaking abruptly, excitedly.

"You are riding in the direction of the house of Colonel Featherstonehaugh?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied in some surprise, "I am."

"You are going to see Diana Featherstonehaugh, this fair-haired Saxon beauty of whom I hear so much?"

"That is true," he said.

"And I also am going thither," she continued. "We will go together."

"Colonel Featherstonehaugh is not at home," said Lorimer.

"I know it," was the reply. "But his daughter is: and it is with her I would have speech."

Andrew Lorimer now looked at her keenly and doubtfully, for by her words and manner he almost questioned her sanity.

"I was not aware you knew Miss Featherstonehaugh."

"Neither do I," replied Maddalena, fiercely: "but she shall know me, and hear me, and heed my words, or it will be bad for her; for if she mind not my warning, but encourage the addresses of my false lord, Monte-Cerro, who now seeks to disown me as his wife, there shall be bloodshed and violent death—ay, as surely as a God reigns in heaven."

Andrew Lorimer now sought to calm her, and presently he elicited from her the cause of her fury.

Briefly, she had discovered that the Marquis of Monte-Cerro—he whom she regarded as her husband, though he wished to repudiate the tie—intended to offer himself as a suitor for the hand of Diana Featherstonehaugh.

She grew white and shook with passion as she spoke of this to Andrew Lorimer, and with clinched hand raised aloft, swore a most terrible oath, that were such a thing attempted to be

carried out, her vengeance should mete out to one or both a violent death.

"This I swear I will do, though I myself be torn in pieces by wild horses. I swear by the memory of my mother—by all the saints—by the blessed Virgin the mother of Christ, and by the glory of God who reigns in heaven!"

With a great deal of trouble and after a long time, Andrew Lorimer succeeded in partially pacifying her and dissuaded her from her intention of riding on to the Haugh.

He had considerable influence over her by reason of the great service he had rendered her, and unwillingly, almost sullenly, she acceded to his wishes, and promised not to carry out her design.

He, on his part, engaged to inform Diana Featherstonehaugh of what had passed, and to warn her against encouraging the addresses of the Marquis.

At the close of a long interview, Maddalena, after bidding Lorimer a grateful adieu, and with her last words reminding him of his promise, turned her horse's head and left him.

Andrew Lorimer watched her gravely, till almost out of sight, and then himself proceeded on his way to the house of Colonel Featherstonehaugh.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT TRANSPIRED AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE.

ANDREW LORIMER was greatly discommoded by the threatening words and manner of the girl.

He was in doubt how to give the message to Diana Featherstonehaugh for more reasons than one.

In the first place, if she looked upon it seriously, as he did, it might terrify her, and give her a severe shock, which, in her present state, after the fainting fit she had so lately experienced, was extremely undesirable.

Again, the lady might consider it an impertinence on his part to enter on so delicate a subject.

And yet he felt so deeply impressed by the impassioned, earnest manner of the Italian girl, that it seemed his duty to mention the affair to Diana Featherstonehaugh, even though he might not think it advisable to repeat to her the warning threat of Maddalena, as delivered by her in all its fierce intensity.

As to the exact words in which he would make the communication to her, and how far he would go in repeating the substance of what she said, that, he resolved, should depend upon circumstances.

He would wait and see in what humour the young lady was, and perhaps, he thought, she

might herself make some remark, by means of which he could, with less embarrassment, introduce the subject.

Having seen the patient, who lay in a quiet sleep, Andrew Lorimer went to the breakfast-room, where he found Diana and Isabel awaiting him.

The breakfast hour had long since passed, but the young ladies had postponed their meal on his account.

Both rose and greeted him, Diana kindly, but in a languid manner; Isabel warmly, cordially, as was her nature.

"Oh, Doctor Lorimer!" cried the latter, "how tired you must be. You will really make yourself ill. Fancy sitting up all night with one patient, and then at daybreak starting on a twenty mile ride and back, to visit another. How can you do it?"

"And you are not dreadfully sleepy and worn-out," put in Diana, gazing at him with an expression which might be defined as compassionate curiosity, mingled with admiration.

Her woman's nature caused her to pity him for the fatigue she thought he must suffer, and her woman's heart to regard him with a sort of wondering admiration.

Herself quite unaccustomed to make any, even the slightest, self-sacrifice, and never even witnessing anything of the sort in the society in which she moved, it was quite extraordinary for her to note the genial cheerfulness with which the young surgeon sacrificed sleep, even rest, for the sake of others—his patients.

"I do not feel particularly sleepy just now, Miss Vanstone," he said, in reply to Isabel. Habit has a great deal to do with it. A sense

of duty nerves me to the task, and custom makes it easy."

"But you will surely have a sleep in the afternoon?" asked Diana.

"It will depend upon the state of my patients. I never suffer weariness on my part to interfere with their welfare. Before now I have been up for three consecutive nights, with no sleep at all, so that I look at one night as quite a trifle."

"Good heavens! Doctor Lorimer. You amaze me! However can you undergo such terrible fatigue and loss of sleep? You must surely be something more than human."

"Scarcely grand and important enough for a demigod," replied Lorimer, smiling at her remark.

Isabel laughed, while Diana regarded him in a wondering sort of way.

"Indeed!" remarked Isabel, "you deserve to be a demigod much more than those terrible heroes of antiquity—Hercules, Ajax, Achilles—and such like monsters of strength and ferocity. But seriously," she added, "do you not suffer in health from such desperate hard work, and the deprivation of sleep you so willingly endure?"

"A good constitution, Miss Vanstone," was the quiet reply of Lorimer, "plain living, and a quiet mind enable me to get through my duties, which certainly are rather heavy sometimes, without injury to my health, or even great inconvenience."

"Will you not take some pigeon pie, Doctor Lorimer—or here is broiled turkey?" asked Diana. "You are really making no breakfast at all. I see you taking nothing but dry toast with your tea."

"Thanks, Miss Featherstonehaugh. I have finished. Two cups of your excellent tea, and

fresh toast from home-made bread, as I perceive yours is, have made for me an excellent meal. I find it best, after being up all night, to be sparing in what I eat. But let us talk about the patient. He sleeps now, but I was able to feel his pulse without awakening him. He is, I think, decidedly better."

"Will he be well enough to be moved?" asked Diana eagerly. "I am most anxious that he should not be here when my father arrives. You don't know how I dread the Colonel seeing him."

"I think, for his own sake, it would be far better that he should not be moved. Still, if you think there is danger of your father flying into a rage on hearing he is here, and perhaps in his fury insulting or using violent language towards the wounded man, why, in that case, I am of opinion that even removal would be less dangerous, do less harm, than the excitement caused by a stormy scene. Do you think it probable that your father's anger would overpower his reason—his sense of what is right and wrong?"

"Oh, yes—yes—yes; only too probable, Doctor Lorimer. I am almost sure that at the very least he would, with cruel and insulting words, order him to leave the Haugh."

"Then I make up my mind at once," replied Lorimer; "he must be removed. You can, doubtless, make up a sort of couch in a large carriage."

"Yes, yes, undoubtedly. Pray see to it, Doctor Lorimer. I leave it all in your hands!" cried Diana earnestly. "You have been so kind; I know you will be so to the end."

"It is a very bad road," said Isabel, "and there is a ferry to cross. The stream is still swollen from last week's heavy rain; and you know,

Diana, when that is the case, the water is so high as to overflow into the carriage."

"He must not be removed home," said Doctor Lorimer. "He will require constant attention. I must have him under my immediate eye. To take him to his own house would be to remove him yet further from me."

"Where, then, shall he be moved to, Doctor Lorimer?" asked Diana.

"To my house. The road is good, and I have a spare room, where he can have every attention."

Diana was silent for a few moments; then there mounted to her fair face a crimson flush, her eyes were cast down, and when she raised them, they were full of tears.

Isabel gazed at her with surprise, whilst the young surgeon appeared totally unconscious of her agitation, which in all probability he really was.

In fact, the last words of Andrew Lorimer seemed to suddenly enlighten Diana, not as to the man—she knew he was of a true and noble nature—but as to her conduct.

In the interest of humanity, and at her request (woman-like she could not forget that), he had undertaken a most difficult and dangerous case—had relieved her, so far as he could, of terrible anxiety, and now was about to incur further trouble in the same cause.

"And this is the man whom I said I would make love me for sport and petty spite. I am a wretch indeed."

These were the thoughts which brought the bright flush to Diana's cheek—the tears to her eyes.

Always impulsive and passionate, she now

seized Andrew Lorimer's hand, and, to the utter amazement of Isabel, bent down her graceful head, and kissed it.

When she released it, there was a tear thereon.

"Oh, Doctor Lorimer!" she cried with deep feeling; "you are the kindest and best of men! How can I ever repay you?"

The warm touch of her lips on his hand caused a thrill through the frame of the young surgeon, and his usually pale face glowed now with unwonted fire.

His heart beat fast, and it was with difficulty he could command himself sufficiently to restrain the emotion in his voice, as he replied, with as much coldness as possible:

"Miss Featherstonehaugh, I always do the best I can for my patients. The Montaigne family is wealthy, and doubtless I shall be well rewarded for any extra trouble I may take about the case."

The answer was a cold one—scarcely even a polite one—and as such Lorimer intended it.

It drove back the blood to Diana's heart, and chilled her to the soul.

"I will go now, and see to the state of the patient; and, having your kind permission, Miss Featherstonehaugh, will give the necessary orders about the earriage."

With these words, Andrew Lorimer bowed, and left the room.

"Oh, Diana! how could you have done it?" said Isabel. "What must he think of you, and how cold he was!"

Diana's bosom heaved.

She saw now to what a terrible humiliation she had subjected herself.

Not from design, or to carry out the scheme of

conquest, but from sudden uncontrollable impulse, she had committed an act scarcely consistent with maidenly modesty.

And she had met with a repulse—polite, but cold.

She had kissed the hand of the obscure young surgeon whom she threatened to bring to her feet—had let fall a tear upon it.

And he had calmly and politely bowed himself out.

“Oh, Diana ! how could you have done it ?”

In words she made no reply ; but throwing her arms around Isabel, burst into a passionate flood of tears.

CHAPTER XXII.

VALENTINE MONTAIGNE'S REMOVAL FROM THE HAUGH.

ANDREW LORIMER, gifted with great powers of self-command, was able to bring an exciting scene to a dignified conclusion; but he was deeply affected.

"Oh, the siren! the siren! I must flee from her—get beyond the sphere of her too powerful fascinations."

Thus thinking, he walked quickly to the room where lay the patient.

Valentine Montaigne was awake, and Doctor Lorimer proceeded to explain to him that it was necessary for him to be removed.

At this he seemed to be annoyed, and asked bitterly,

"Does then the hatred of the father towards our family extend to the daughter? I thank Miss Featherstonehaugh for her hospitality most profoundly."

"It was I who decided that you must be removed from here," said Andrew Lorimer. "Miss Featherstonehaugh's whole thought since she discovered you lying helpless in the road has been for your welfare. You do her injustice."

Speaking even as he was to a patient in danger of his life, Andrew Lorimer would not suffer any blame to rest on Diana Featherstonehaugh.

"Your pardon, doctor, and that of Miss Featherstonchaugh, I ought to beg. But you will not tell her, I am sure, of my foolish speech. Do with me as you like, doctor; I leave myself entirely to you, certain that I could not be in better hands."

"Very well, in about an hour's time we shall move you. I do not think it will do you any injury, though quite probably you will suffer a little pain. However, the road is good, and I shall be at hand."

"The road good," cried Valentine Montaigne, "between this and our place! Doctor Lorimer, you must be dreaming."

"We are not going to move you home to your mother's house."

"Why not?"

"In the first place, because the roads are very bad, and also because you will require more incessant attention than I can give you at your own home."

"Where, then, do you mean to take me?" asked Valentine Montaigne.

"To Festonhaugh—to my house. I have a spare room exactly suited to your case—large, light, and airy, and above all you will always be within reach of medical attendance."

"Really, Doctor Lorimer, you are extremely kind, and I should be very grateful; for, to tell the truth, my mother and brother being in London, I do not look forward with any pleasure to being (save servants) alone in our gloomy old house."

Andrew Lorimer was a man of few words, and now proceeded to adjust the bandages and straps, and to make final preparations for moving the wounded man.

In less than an hour, Valentine Montaigne was safely installed in the carriage which had been fitted up as a couch, and was on his road to Festonhaugh.

Diana came down the steps of the Haugh, and bade her guest and patient farewell at the carriage door.

"I hope, sir, you will soon recover entirely from the effects of your accident," she said.

Valentine Montaigne was in excellent spirits, notwithstanding certain sharp twinges of pain which occasionally reminded him of his injuries.

"Miss Featherstonehaugh, I can have little doubt of a rapid recovery. It would be strange indeed if with such a kind and tender guardian angel as you have proved to me, and with so skilful a surgeon as Doctor Lorimer, I did not soon recover; in fact, it would be exceedingly ungrateful on my part did I not do so."

With these words he took Diana's hand, ostensibly to bid her farewell, but there was scarcely any necessity for the gentle pressure with which he favoured that hand, nor the glance he bent on her fair face, not ardent or rude, but a languishing, tender look scarcely to be understood by Diana Featherstonehaugh, who had been honoured with many such mute signs of admiration and adoration by many suitors.

She coloured up and smiled on Valentine, obviously not displeased.

The next moment, raising her eyes, she caught the grave, earnest gaze of Andrew Lorimer.

Remembering the incident which had just occurred in the drawing-room, it threw her into a terrible state of confusion. She grew red and white by turns, and could not find speech.

Andrew Lorimer gave the word for the carriage to proceed.

"I will overtake you," he said to Valentine Montaigne, "ere you have gone a mile. Miss Featherstonehaugh, a few words with you before I leave."

"At your service, sir," replied Diana, with great effort speaking calmly. "Farewell to you, Mr. Montaigne, and a speedy recovery."

The carriage moved slowly away, and Diana ran rapidly up the steps and to the drawing-room, where she sent a message to the young surgeon to say that she was awaiting him.

It was scarcely civil of her, and Lorimer felt it.

"She might at least have asked me to join her herself, instead of running away in that manner and sending a message by a servant. It is an unpleasant task I have before me, one in which I may be misconstrued; but I consider it my duty. I have a fear of that Italian girl. I think it possible, probable even, that in a fit of blind, jealous passion she would carry out her threat."

Andrew Lorimer, thus thinking, ascended slowly to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DIANA HEARS SOMETHING OF MONTE-CERRO.

DIANA FEATHERSTONEHAUGH, remembering the result of their last interview, had schooled herself, as she thought, to betray no emotion whatever, and to carry out this intention, spoke with a degree of coolness and hauteur amounting almost to rudeness.

Isabel Vanstone was there, and addressing her, not the young surgeon, Diana said,

“Doctor Lorimer expressed a wish for an interview with me before leaving. I do not know whether what he has to say is of such a strictly private nature as to preclude your being a witness.”

The speech and manner of its delivery were together almost offensive.

Diana looked coldly away ; but Isabel, watching his face, noted an angry shadow followed by a slight flush which quickly ensued.

For a moment only, however ; for it vanished almost as soon as it came.

And Andrew Lorimer was able to speak calmly, his handsome pale face as impassive as its wont.

“It is truly a very delicate subject on which I have to speak, Miss Featherstonehaugh ; but so far as I am concerned, there is no reason whatever why Miss Vanstone should not hear what I have to say.”

Diana, in spite of all her efforts, could not avoid betraying some agitation.

She had a vague sort of feeling, half of dread mixed with indignation, and in some measure of triumph, that this cold, reserved young surgeon had suddenly succumbed to her fascinations, was about to throw himself at her feet, and—boundless audacity!—make a formal proposal for her hand.

Even Isabel was quite puzzled—utterly at a loss to imagine what was coming.

“Goodness gracious!” she said to herself, “can it be possible that he is about to propose to her? If so, alas! poor Andrew Lorimer! Too surely and swiftly has she carried out her cruel design, and added one more to her list of conquests and victims.”

Diana seated herself, and not daring to trust herself to speak, motioned Lorimer to do so likewise.

With eyes cast down and nervously playing with his riding whip, he spoke,

“That of which I have to speak is, and always must be, an extremely delicate subject for a man to address a lady upon.”

He raised his eyes for a moment, and Diana, still without speaking, bowed her head slightly in token for him to proceed.

“It relates to yourself, Miss Featherstonehaugh, and one who is about to become a suitor for your hand.”

“Then he is about to propose,” thought the fair Diana. “The audacity of the man! Now will come my triumph.”

This seemed to give her courage and to dispel her nervousness and agitation.

He had humiliated her, and now her turn was coming.

It was for her to plant her foot on his neck.

Isabel Vanstone, foreseeing the withering scorn with which Diana would receive his proposal, sympathizing deeply with the young surgeon, suddenly, vehemently even, gave utterance to some words of warning.

"Doctor Lorimer," she cried in a voice tremulous with excitement, "pray be careful what you say. Think, consider, before you speak words which can never be recalled."

"I have thought, I have considered," replied Lorimer, "and I must speak."

Diana, confident of an approaching triumph, was now able to smile gaily and to speak in a tone of badinage.

"Pray, Isabel, allow Doctor Lorimer to say his say. I shall know how to reply."

Strange to say, both young ladies had fully persuaded themselves that Doctor Lorimer was about to commit himself to a formal offer to the heiress of Featherstonehaugh.

Andrew Lorimer, on his part, was both surprised and hurt, offended even, by the tone and manner of Diana.

But having undertaken the task, he resolved to carry it through, unpleasant though it proved.

"The suitor of whom I spoke would be, in the opinion of many, of your father even, possibly one not altogether unworthy of you."

"The insolent audacity of the man!" thought Diana, fully persuaded he was speaking of himself.

And even Isabel, respecting to the verge of admiration the young surgeon, gazed at him with a species of horror.

Diana, smiling and bowing in her own serene-like manner, now asked with a slight scornful tinge in her tones, and though fully convinced that he spoke of himself, pretending to think it was as the emissary of another,

"Might I then be favoured with the name of this suitor who has chosen in Doctor Lorimer such an able advocate?"

His words in reply to this would seem utterly to dispel all doubt on the subject.

"It is not as an advocate for another, Miss Featherstonehaugh, I speak to you."

Diana rose, and interrupting him, said with affected surprise and in smiling scorn,

"Am I then to understand that Doctor Andrew Lorimer honours me with a serious proposal for my hand?"

Until that moment Lorimer had not the slightest idea that his words, perhaps a little ambiguous, had been so singularly misinterpreted.

It seemed to him such a singular blunder, that, to the utter confusion and amazement of Diana, he actually laughed.

Isabel regarded Lorimer with intense bewilderment; while Diana, with flashing eyes and flushed face, exclaimed,

"You laugh, sir! I am at a loss to understand the cause of your merriment."

"A thousand pardons, Miss Featherstonehaugh. I am guiltless of intentional offence; but the absurdity of the mistake, that I, a poor country surgeon, should aspire to the hand of the heiress of Featherstonehaugh is surely enough to be ridiculous."

"Of what are you talking?" cried Diana impetuously and trembling with passion. "You

speak of a suitor for my hand, and say you are not an advocate for another. If words mean anything, I have a right to conclude that you are your own advocate, and that it is of yourself you speak."

Andrew Lorimer was gifted with keen perception, and it now flashed across his mind that her anger was caused by disappointment of the opportunity of humiliating him.

"Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said, "I assure you such a supremely insolent and audacious thought never entered my mind. It is my clumsy mode of speaking which has caused the mistake. Pray be seated and allow me to explain."

Then in his usual calm and equable manner he proceeded.

The consternation and dismay of Diana may be imagined.

Confident of a triumphant victory, looking forward to the sweet revenge of a scornful repulse, she had the bitter knowledge that once more she had placed herself in a false position, and that the triumph, if there were any, belonged to Andrew Lorimer, and not to Diana Featherstonehaugh.

The young surgeon, having related as much as he thought necessary of his interview with Maddalena and her furious threats of vengeance should Diana favour his suit, rose to take his leave.

"I suppose I ought to thank you, Doctor Lorimer, for the interest you have taken in me and my affairs. The unfortunate young woman, Maddalena, need be under no apprehension of the rivalry of Diana Featherstonehaugh in the affections of that bold, bad man the Marquis of Monte-

Cerro. Again I thank you, Doctor Lorimer," she went on, doing her utmost to speak in a tone of calm indifference. "Pray make your mind easy on my behalf, for I can assure you I have not yet seen the man whom I consider worthy even of the attempt to win my favour."

"Proud words — boastful words," thought Andrew Lorimer.

"I am glad to hear it, Miss Featherstonehaugh, for your sake. I congratulate you on the invulnerability of your heart."

This, with a quiet bow a slight smile, and he was gone.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DIANA'S THREAT.

DIANA and Isabel, again alone together in the stately drawing-room, gazed a moment or two in each other's face.

Diana laughed, but not a laugh of pleasure or merriment.

The expression of her face and the angry glitter of her eyes sufficiently proved this.

"Isabel," she said, stamping her foot as she stood before her friend, with her small hand clinched, "that man will drive me mad! I could admire him did I not hate him so. The quiet insolence of his impassibility and indifference would be sublime were it not insulting."

Said gentle Isabel,

"Indeed, Diana, I do not think you have reason to blame Doctor Lorimer. It is true we have both made a mistake—an awkward and embarrassing mistake for you, I grant; but I am sure our doing so was quite unintentional on his part. Do you know, I really feared that you had succeeded but too well in the cruel purpose you avowed to me? I feared that, by force of your fascinations, Andrew Lorimer had alike lost his heart and his head, and coming down from his high estate, was about to make himself ridiculous by an absurd proposal."

With all a woman's perverseness, Diana was displeased at the words "absurd proposal."

"I do not see anything so utterly absurd in it, Isabel," she said, pettishly "I suppose you mean to insinuate now that I am unworthy of this paragon of yours—this demi-god, something more than human?"

"Diana, do not be unjust. You know I mean nothing of the kind. I was thinking of the great gulf between you—the wide difference in wealth and rank between a poor village surgeon and the heiress of Featherstonehaugh."

Diana in her then mood was hard to please. If she chose to speak disparagingly of the young surgeon herself, it annoyed her that any other should, even her dearest friend.

"I am sure I do not know why you should remind me of the great gulf between us, Isabel," she said shortly. "Doctor Lorimer is a gentleman in education, a gentleman in manner and breeding, a gentleman in heart, and I thoroughly believe a gentleman by birth."

"I quite agree with you, Diana, and for these very reasons, with others more powerful, I grieve that you should announce your intention of inflicting misery and humiliation on a kind and noble-minded man."

"Humiliation!" cried Diana, passionately; "has he not humiliated me? Is not his presence, his calm, freezing manner, a constant humiliation?"

"Surely, Diana," remarked Isabel, "you have not become so infatuated with vanity and the love of conquest as to feel humiliated because you have met a man who is proof against the wiles of the siren—refuses to bow down and worship you?"

"Yes, yes," cried Diana. "That is just it—I

do feel humiliated thereby. But I will triumph yet; I will make him bend his knee and bow his proud head at my feet. And then, when I have won his heart, and he lives but for me, then will have come the day of my triumph and of his humiliation."

"Pray God," said Isabel, fervently, "that I may never live to see that day—witness my dearest friend guilty of a cruel crime at the expense of a good man, admired, respected, and revered by all who know him."

Diana laughed—a short mocking laugh—which jarred painfully on the ears of Isabel.

"A crime? How absurd to stigmatize flirtation, a woman's love of conquest, as a crime."

"We have it on divine authority that it is our duty to love our neighbours as ourselves. Surely, then, wilfully to disobey that precept, and to inflict wanton injury on a fellow-creature, must be a crime."

"Well, well, Isabel," said Diana, again forcing a laugh, "we will not argue the point, for I don't think we shall ever agree. Perhaps I shall be merciful. We shall see. But before mercy there must come submission. If it can be done by any art or wile, with the skilful use of which I am not altogether ignorant, I will break through the icy barrier of reserve which Andrew Lorimer has built up around himself—will warm into life this cold statue—will force Andrew Lorimer to acknowledge the power of love, to kneel at my feet, humbly suing for a word, a look, in place of calmly, insolently advising, admonishing. And then—then—"

"What then?" asked Isabel, interrupting. "Alas! I can guess too well. Should you suc-

ceed in the first part of your design, the sequel will be but too easy. Andrew Lorimer is not one to love lightly. It may prove a heavy blow—a crushing blow, perhaps even a death blow. And then, when perhaps too late, you may repent.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Isabel; who knows what may happen? You warned me, a few days back, not to try and win his heart, hinting that in the process I might lose my own. Who knows? such may be my destined fate. I may take it into my giddy head, and—and—”

Here she burst into a sudden fit of laughter, apparently genuine and uncontrollable.

“And actually marry the man—ah! the idea is really too good. Fancy me, Diana Featherstonehaugh, the wife of a country surgeon, poor and obscure Mistress Andrew Lorimer.”

Again the silvery peal broke out.

Isabel sighed.

“Worse than that might happen for your happiness, Diana. I pray heaven the sad forebodings I cannot help feeling may never be realised.”

CHAPTER XXV

THE RETURN OF THE COLONEL—THE SCHEMES OF
THE MARQUIS.

THAT afternoon, Colonel Featherstonehaugh arrived with half-a-dozen friends—amongst them, Sir Clyfford Clyffe, a north country baronet, and one of the many suitors for the hand of Diana Featherstonehaugh.

He was wealthy and of old family, of a handsome person, suitable age, and yet it is quite certain that his chance of winning the heiress of Featherstonehaugh was infinitesimal, for Diana had conceived an absolute dislike for him. He was favoured by the Colonel, her father, only so far as this, that he declared himself satisfied with the rank and position of Sir Clyfford should he succeed in winning his daughter. However, though granting that much, the Colonel was secretly well pleased that the baronet did not make good progress in his suit; for in his heart he thought his daughter and heiress worthy of a more brilliant match.

Sir Clyfford Clyffe, however, a much younger man than himself, was a personal friend, and had laid him under considerable obligations.

Colonel Featherstonehaugh had declared his intention of not forcing a husband on his daughter's choice, nor even of employing strong influence.

Strictly and sternly, however, he asserted his

right of reserving to himself the power of veto, and he would be a bold man who, aware of the Colonel's terrible reputation as a duellist and manslayer, would venture even to urge his suit to the daughter unknown to the father.

The Colonel's friends whom he brought with him, in addition to Sir Clyfford Clyffe, being men of fashion and men of wealth, were all accompanied or followed by their valets, some also by grooms and horses, so that on this afternoon, a few hours only after the departure of Valentine Montaigne and Doctor Lorimer, a great change had come over the scene.

Excitement, and the natural desire of a young and handsome woman to appear to the best advantage before her father's guests, for the time almost banished the unpleasant memories connected with Dr. Andrew Lorimer.

Almost, but not quite.

For even when presiding with all grace and brilliancy at her father's table, the vision of the young surgeon of Festonhaugh would occasionally rise before her.

Then for an instant her bright eyes would flash with a brighter gleam, a delicate tint mount to her fair cheek, and she would say inwardly :

"I will do it! I will do it! I will make him love me yet!"

There was one other thing which caused her a little uneasiness ; but after this first evening, that also ceased.

This was the fear lest the Colonel should find out that Valentine Montaigne, even as the result of an accident, had been an inmate of his house.

On the household she knew she could depend,

all having been duly cautioned to preserve silence on the point.

There was a chance, however, that the Colonel might hear of the episode through some stray gossip.

However, day after day passed, and no mention of the subject was brought under her father's notice.

He was a free-living man, that would in these days be considered a hard drinker, though not so then, and with his guests did ample justice to the choicewines in the well-filled cellars of the Haugh.

When not thwarted in any way, nor his fierce temper aroused, he was a jovial and hospitable English gentleman, troubling himself little about the affairs of his neighbours, content to amuse himself and guests, proud of his ancient seat, of the princely hospitality he was able to offer, and of his lovely daughter, Diana, by general consent the most admired beauty for many a long league around.

Casually, it was mentioned one day that the Eyrie was untenanted, save by the servants, and the Colonel seemed to suppose that both the sons were absent with their mother.

He had not heard of the accident to Valentine, and it was quite probable that he would never do so.

There being no necessity for his professional services, Andrew Lorimer did not visit the Haugh, and it was only incidentally that Diana heard through the old housekeeper that the patient was progressing favourably under his skilful care and watchful eye.

After a few days, Diana, who spite of herself remembered and treasured up all that the young

surgeon had said, wondered at his last words. The warning message he had delivered to her was not borne out by facts.

Day after day passed, and the enormously wealthy, half-Italian Marquis of Monte-Cerro, did not make his appearance as an open suitor for her hand.

For this, however, there were sufficient reasons, though, of course, she was ignorant of them.

Maddalena, whose passions, easily roused by excitement, did not soon subside after her interview with Andrew Lorimer, happened to meet the Marquis as he was riding in the direction of the Haugh, and with blind jealousy she at once assumed he was then bound to carry out the intention of which she had discovered an inkling, of presenting himself as a suitor to Diana Featherstonehaugh.

Then there ensued a burst of passion.

So fierce were her words and manner, so furious her looks, that the Marquis was completely staggered, even terrified, and decided on the expediency of throwing her off her guard for the present, and at the earliest possible opportunity removing her from his path in the treacherous manner already mentioned, immuring her in a mad-house, there to end her days.

A cruel and desperately wicked scheme, but one on which he thoroughly determined, and would certainly not scruple to carry into effect.

Very partially, however, and very slowly, did he succeed in disarming the suspicions of Maddalena.

He was very careful to keep away from the Haugh, and she, watching him incessantly, was satisfied of this. But still she was not entirely thrown off her guard.

It would really seem from her behaviour that she had some sort of suspicion as to the intended treachery of the Marquis, and even of its nature, for she kept her temper within bounds, and ceased to give way to those furious bursts of passion on which, duly exaggerated and with attendant circumstances, Monte-Cerro intended to found his charge of insanity, and have her removed out of his path for ever.

For well he knew that so long as the liberal stipend he intended to offer for her maintenance was paid, she would never be pronounced sane, and the doors of the private mad-house would never open to the unfortunate girl until she was carried out a corpse.

Gradually the system which Monte-Cerro had adopted produced a certain effect, though not entirely that which he expected and wished.

She seemed to sink into a state of moody apathy, and her vehement jealousy and suspicion as to the designs of the Marquis on the heart of Diana Featherstonehaugh abated.

For a long time she was watchful, and he knew it.

So in order not only to throw her off her guard, but off the true scent, he allowed her to get knowledge of various love affairs, flirtations, and gallantries.

These did not seem so greatly to inflame her anger as the one thought on which she had for so long brooded, that he intended to espouse Diana.

He was crafty enough to permit himself to be discovered in sundry intrigues, or at least to give her reason for strong suspicion. She would be angry and reproach him sometimes bitterly

enough, but with no display of that ungovernable passion which fairly awed him.

He would reason with her, excuse himself, talk lightly of man's constancy as a thing in its integrity to be only written of by poets, or dreamed of by fools, but not to be realised in actual life.

By dint of indifference and a certain amount of false fondness he at times displayed, he continued to obtain a sort of sullen acquiescence on her part in his notoriously loose life ; at least, so far as this, that she entirely ceased to threaten or reproach him.

The object and aim which he strove after with both skill and persistence, was to impress her with the idea that he had no intention whatever of destroying all possibility of repairing the wrong he had done her by wedding another. It seemed that in a measure he succeeded ; that, unable to obtain better terms, she was willing to wait her time content, so that she had no reason to think he meant to throw up between himself and her the irremovable barrier of a legal marriage with another.

After a time the Marquis judged it prudent to visit Colonel Featherstonehaugh, and by boldly telling her he was going thither on business, he contrived to evade her suspicions.

However, though he visited occasionally, and sought to impress Diana favourably, he did not at once make a formal proposal for her hand. He resolved first to make tolerably sure of his ground with the Colonel.

In this he had no great difficulty, for his wealth was enormous ; and as his elder brother was childless and in poor health, there was a chance

of his attaining to the royal dignity and title of Prince of an Italian state.

This thought could not but be pleasing to the ambition of the Colonel. Proud of his ancient family, the peerless beauty of his daughter, he thought that she was well worthy of royal rank.

In fact, Colonel Featherstonehaugh perceived that the Marquis had cast favourable eyes on his daughter, and was inclined to offer every reasonable facility.

Days and weeks passed over, and Monte-Cerro, carefully preparing the ground before him, judged that the time had now come to strike.

A strange rumour came to his knowledge which caused him to decide on prompt action.

He was wealthy and knew the value of wealth—of money judiciously bestowed in the way of bribes ; and, determining to be kept well informed of all which had occurred at the Haugh, especially with regard to any suitor who might appear for the hand of the fair Diana, he had bought over to his interest the cars of the Colonel's confidential valet, Walter.

This man one day astonished him with a piece of news so extraordinary that he at first thought he must be mad or dreaming.

It was concerning a certain rival for the favour of Diana Featherstonehaugh.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MARQUIS FEARS A RIVAL.

THE Marquis of Monte-Cerro rode slowly up the avenue leading to the Haugh.

He was resolved on this very day to bring affairs to a crisis—to ask the hand of Diana Featherstonehaugh from her father at once—to urge his suit on the young lady, and if possible gain her definite consent.

Failing in this—and with her father's powerful sanction—he doubted not that, at the least, he would obtain formal acceptance as a suitor for her hand.

That done the rest was comparatively easy.

His preparations with regard to Maddalena, were all ready. The treacherous scheme he had concocted to get rid of her was ripe for immediate execution.

As he mounted the steps of the Haugh, the thought with which his mind was burdened found expression in the briefly muttered exclamation :

“It must be done. It shall be done, this day—this very day. Too long have I vacillated, yielding to unworthy terror—silly scruples. The thought of a rival in the field, with even a chance of success, is enough to nerve me to a more desperate deed than the quiet removal of a half-mad girl to a place where she will be cared for.”

The plans of the Marquis were well laid, and now that his mind was made up, he would not shrink from carrying them out to the very utmost.

His scheme consisted, as the reader knows, in immuring his victim in a life-long imprisonment in a mad-house.

The necessary certificate was ready to his hand; for then, as now, base, sordid, and unscrupulous men were to be found even in the noble profession of medicine willing to commit a cruel crime for a large bribe.

The document was signed, and in his possession, and the hired ruffians who were to kidnap the unhappy victim were ready—ay, eager to earn their reward.

And what of the motive which suddenly aroused the Marquis to the necessity of prompt action?

“A rival in the field,” were part of his muttered words, as he mounted the steps to the Haugh.

And the rival—real or fancied.

A gentleman whose acquaintance the reader has already made.

Valentine Montaigne.

Under the skilful care of Andrew Lorimer, he recovered rapidly from the effects of his injuries.

Of course he did not visit at the Haugh, even to return thanks to Diana for her kindness and hospitality, on account of the deadly animosity which the Colonel, her father, cherished towards his family.

Nevertheless, living in the same country, meeting in the same society, attending balls and at times even visiting at the same houses, it was almost impossible but that he and Diana should sometimes be brought in contact.

They met—he full of gratitude and admiration for the lovely girl, his one time hostess, she not insensible to a feeling of sympathy and interest in the handsome young cavalier, whom she had by an accident befriended.

The manner and speech of Valentine, always impulsive and headstrong, were quite sufficient to inform Diana that he looked upon her with feelings of passionate adoration.

And her knowledge of the bitter hostility of her father to the house of Montaigne should have been sufficient to warn her against nourishing, in the slightest degree, so fatal a passion.

Diana persuaded herself that she did not encourage him; but it is certain she did not repulse him with that marked coldness which she should have shown to produce any effect on such an ardent nature as that of Valentine Montaigne.

All, gifted with any power of perception, could tell the state of affairs with Valentine Montaigne, indeed he scarcely made a secret of his admiration for the heiress of Featherstonehaugh.

Headstrong and impetuous, he gave not a thought to the insuperable obstacle between himself and Diana—the implacable hatred of her father for all of his name.

Of course the fact of his being smitten by the beautiful heiress, not being unnoticed, was also not untalked about.

Some people smiled, and remarked that possibly an alliance between scions of the two houses would end the long feud between the Featherstonehaughs and Montaignes.

Such persons knew little of Colonel Featherstonehaugh — of his relentless, unforgiving nature.

As for Diana, like a careless, giddy butterfly she fluttered about, and persisted in enjoying the marked attention of Valentine, all the while feeling satisfied that there could be nothing serious on either side, only a harmless flirtation.

Sometimes the thought of her father—of his terrible anger should it come to his ears, that she and Valentine Montaigne were even on friendly terms—crossed her mind.

But she would dismiss the idea.

“We neither of us mean anything serious—certainly I do not. Valentine is handsome, agreeable, witty; his company and conversation please me. Why should I debar myself from what I like? Besides the Colonel scarcely ever mixes in this gay society—his pleasures are of a more solid nature.”

It was true, as his daughter Diana said, that her father did not trouble himself by mingling in the gayer life of the county in attending balls, parties, and so forth.

He had boundless faith in his daughter, for the reason, principally, that she was his daughter, and so that she conformed to the usages of high life, was properly chaperoned and so forth, he left her pretty much to her own devices.

He heard nothing of the fast ripening acquaintance between Diana and Valentine Montaigne, for no one cared to risk his anger by mentioning the subject without reason.

But though it came not to his ears, a rumour, first vague, gradually gaining force and consistence was afloat, touching the flirtation—to use the mildest word—which had sprung up between the heiress of Featherstonehaugh and the handsome scion of the house of Montaigne.

Now it happened that this faint report came to the knowledge of the Marquis of Monte-Cerro.

This it was which caused him sudden alarm, and made him resolve to strike at once, and to the point.

The Colonel's valet, Walter, received him at the door.

"Is your masterin, Walter?"

"Yes, my Lord ; I will announce you."

"Thanks—a few words with you first." The Marquis then drew the valet on one side, and conversed with him in a low tone for a minute or so.

Then Walter went to announce his arrival.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE VISIT.

COLONEL FEATHERSTONEHAUGH lived freely, as indeed did nearly all well-to-do gentlemen in those days—and though by no means given to drink in the way of tippling, made a point of finishing his two bottles of port after dinner.

This habit entailed a penalty in the shape of a fit of gout, with which he was visited two or three times a year.

On this occasion the attack was more than usually severe, the injured ankle so skilfully cured by Andrew Lorimer being the seat of pain.

The Colonel, his foot swathed in flannel, lay on a large, old fashioned couch, drawn up to the side of the huge open fireplace of the grand hall.

This was his favourite apartment, suiting well his proud nature.

Above him, and all around, were portraits of his ancestors, from his father to the mail-clad warrior, founder of his family.

Ancient arms and trophies of the chase were hung in suitable places, while over the mantelpiece was displayed the arms and haughty motto of the Featherstonehaughs—“*Aut auri aut sanguinis profusus.*”

There was one characteristic about the fierce Colonel, proving that, with all his faults, he had

some nobility of nature. He did not allow physical pain to affect his temper, or in any way to render his language and behaviour more harsh towards those around him than was its wont.

His anger was easily aroused, and as terrible, but not more so, by reason of bodily pain.

At the time when we again introduce him to the notice of the reader, lying with swollen and painful foot and ankle on the couch in his ancestral hall, his daughter Diana and Isabel Vanstone are with him.

For gentle Isabel, strangely enough, could do far more with him than Diana, and had a power which no one else possessed, of soothing and calming his angry passions.

Since last we spoke of Isabel, she had been to her home with the old aunt who acted as her guardian, and was now paying a second visit to the Haugh, at the earnest request, not only of Diana, but of her father.

For the latter declared, that his daughter alone was not able to entertain his guests as he could wish, and therefore pressed Isabel to come to the assistance of her friend.

"I do believe, Miss Vanstone," the Colonel said, turning towards her and endeavouring to smile as a sudden pang shot through the limb, "that I shall have to send for this young fellow from Festonhaugh, Andrew Lorimer, who cured my sprained ankle, to see if he can exorcise the demon gout."

Strange to say, Isabel did not favour the idea, she who was such a vehement champion and admirer of the young surgeon.

"I should think, Colonel, that Doctor Robertson was fully competent to deal with gout. You

see, it is not a case of difficulty, requiring great skill as was that of the sprained ankle."

"What, Miss Vanstone!" said the Colonel, in some surprise, "I thought you were Doctor Lorimer's fervent supporter, believed there was no surgeon in the world to compare with him."

Isabel coloured up.

"I do think highly of Doctor Lorimer's skill," she replied, "but for that very reason, on the principle that you do not require a sledge hammer to kill a fly, I thought it was not necessary to call him in for a trifling case."

"A trifling case! oh, great Jove!" groaned the Colonel, "if you had only the pain for one half minute, *you* would not call it a trifling case."

"It is all Isabel's contrariness, papa," said Diana. "I think the best thing you can do will be to send for Doctor Lorimer at once."

Now, be it observed, Andrew Lorimer had not been to the Haugh since the day of the departure of Valentine Montaigne and the arrival, on the same afternoon, of the Colonel.

The latter, even up to this time, had never heard that Valentine Montaigne had been an inmate of his house for days.

Diana had met Andrew twice only. On each occasion the interview was a very brief one, purely accidental, and in the presence of others, so as yet she had had no chance of carrying out the designs on the heart of the young surgeon, which she had declared to her friend.

Isabel darted at her a quick, reproachful glance, but Diana averted her eyes.

"I believe you are right, Diana," said the Colonel, "for you are more consistent in your ad-

vocacy of the young man than Isabel. Are you going to ride out to-day?"

"I seldom allow a day to pass without doing so, papa. If you had not been laid up, I should have been out with the hounds this morning."

"Well, I will not deprive you of your afternoon ride. After lunch you shall ride over to Festonhaugh to Doctor Lorimer's, and bring him back with you. Mind, I do not mean deliver your message and come home, but wait for him, and ride back with him. It will be about dusk when you return, and he will serve as an escort for you."

Again Isabel looked at Diana; this time their eyes met, and Diana coloured to her temples.

"Very well, papa, as you wish," replied the latter, after a few moments' hesitation. "I shall enjoy the ride, besides I can order a few things in Festonhaugh, and that I can do whilst waiting for Doctor Lorimer."

At this moment a servant entered, and said,

"The Marquis of Monte-Cerro, Colonel."

"Ah, show him up. Most happy to see his Lordship."

Diana started, and then taking Isabel's hand said,

"We will retire, papa."

"There is no necessity. The Marquis is not an ogre who will bite you."

"At least, let us change our attire; we are in our morning garden dress."

"Very well," said the Colonel, and turning to the servant, added:

"Show the Marquis in."

The two girls left the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE VALET IMPARTS A SECRET TO THE MARQUIS.

ISABEL noticed, when they were alone together in the drawing room, that Diana was pale and had an anxious, almost scared look on her features. She thought her friend, on consideration, recoiled from the thought of riding over to Festonhaugh and bringing Doctor Lorimer back with her.

"I see, Diana dear," she said, "how unpleasant it must be to you to ride over on such an errand, and to return with Doctor Lorimer alone. We cannot both leave, unfortunately, on account of the Colonel, or I would accompany you willingly: but, if you like, I will go in your place. You can make some excuse to your father. He cares not who takes the message, so that Doctor Lorimer comes at once. Indeed, Diana, I think it would be best, and, really, I am quite willing."

Diana's eyes flashed, and a passionate look (too often seen on those fair features), an expression like that of a spoilt child thwarted or assuaged, came over her face.

"Quite willing, no doubt, only *too* willing, too happy, for the chance of a long ride alone with Andrew Lorimer?"

A bitter speech, and spoken with sneering emphasis—a most cruel and insulting speech—even if there were any grounds for it.

But though the sentence was framed and ready on Diana's tongue, it was never spoken.

Looking in Isabel's sweet face, she was struck by the expression of truth and perfect innocence of all evil there apparent. She read, too, tender interest, true friendship for herself, and was in time to stop the bitter words on the tip of her tongue.

Reproaching herself, and colouring with shame at the meanness and unworthy suspicion of which she had been guilty, mentally at least, she took her friend's hand.

"Nay, Isabel, it is not that which discomposes me, not the fact of being ordered by papa to ride over with a message to Doctor Lorimer, but the news of the Marquis of Monte-Cerro's visit. I dread that man—I really fear him at the same time that I dislike him."

"That is unreasonable, Diana, surely," urged Isabel. "What reason can you have for fearing him? He can do you no harm: he has no power or influence over you in any shape or form."

"It is all very well for you to say so, Isabel; but he has an influence over me so much as this—that his presence is hateful to me. I feel deep aversion mixed with a sentiment of dread, such as one might feel conscious of in the close vicinity of a snake or some loathesome reptile."

"But this is weakness and folly on your part, Diana. He has no power to injure you."

"That may be so," she replied, moodily: "nevertheless, I fear him—shudder when I meet him. Were I a believer in presentiments, I should say that some day or other that man would cause me desperate grief and misery."

She remained silent for a moment with cast-

down eyes, and then lifting them abruptly to her friend's face said, "Isabel, you believe in spirits—beings of another world?"

"Undoubtedly" was the reply. "Did I not do so, I should disbelieve the Scripture itself."

"Well, spirits, even though they have power at times to make themselves manifest, have not power to injure us—have they?"

"None," answered Isabel, not able to perceive to what Diana was tending.

"And, yet, we all have a dreadful fear at the very idea of a disembodied spirit; even the thought that we are in the presence of beings of another world, seems to strike a chill to the marrow of our bones—to our very souls: none can deny that it is so. Such are, in a measure, my feelings when the Marquis of Monte-Cerro approaches me—speaks to me, and, in his subtle crafty manner, tries, I know, to make himself agreeable to me. And now I hear he is going to make a formal demand for my hand. Is that not enough to discompose me?"

"It might," replied Isabel, "if you had not the power at once and for ever to put an end to all hopes or pretensions on his part, by abruptly telling him he can have no chance; even, if necessary, telling him plainly that you actually dislike him."

"Ah, well!" replied Diana with a sigh. "I must keep up a bold face, and do my best. I only wish I could feel as you do on the subject, Isabel. But we must make haste and dress now. I know the Colonel too well to hope that he will dispense with my attendance after bidding me make my appearance."

The two girls went to their respective rooms, to make necessary alterations in their attire.

The servant who had been despatched to inform Colonel Featherstonehaugh of the arrival of the Marquis of Monte-Cerro, on his return from his errand found that nobleman in earnest conversation with the valet, Walter, in one of the corridors.

"I will be with Colonel Featherstonehaugh almost immediately," said the Marquis hastily, and then resumed the conversation with Walter.

"You say you have knowledge of yet another fact—one which would cause me still greater surprise, and would drive the Colonel, your master, mad with rage. What is it? Speak up, man and speak boldly"

"My Lord, I cannot speak out—I dare not. It is a secret—a secret of my young lady's, not known even to the Colonel."

The words of the valet fully aroused the others curiosity.

"Hark ye, Walter; you are said to be the most privileged of valets."

"I hope so, my Lord."

"They say you have the faculty of hearing, seeing, and saying nothing."

"I trust I have, my Lord," replied the wily and courteous valet.

"Liberality at elections has often won a good seat. I see not why similar profusion in private life should not occasionally cause the revealing of family secrets."

The valet said nothing, well knowing to what the other alluded.

The Marquis quietly handed to him a small purse.

"I know you are a man of taste, Walter. This purse contains some work of art worthy of your

consideration—portraits of the King stamped in gold.”

“They shall have my best attention, my Lord,” replied the valet, quietly putting the bribe in his pocket.

“Now speak out, there’s a good fellow.”

“My Lord, you must promise me you will not mention what I am about to tell you to the Colonel. His rage would be terrible. There would be blood-shed and death to a certainty.”

“Ha !” said the Marquis pondering deeply, “is it so serious a matter ?”

“It is. You will promise, my Lord ?”

“Very well, I promise. Speak out ; and to the point.”

“Well then, my Lord, during the absence of the Colonel, and while Miss Diana was alone here—except the servants, of course—Mr. Valentine Montaigne was a visitor here.”

“He had the audacity to call ! It was well the Colonel did not catch him, according to all I hear. But if that was all, it is not so very dreadful a thing.”

“Ah ! but that’s not all. It was not a visit—a call—but he remained here for several days, lived and slept in the house.”

The Marquis started, and his eyes flashed.

“What !” he cried furiously “He was here alone with Diana Featherstonehaugh. So she, then—”

“Stay a moment, my Lord ; do not be too hasty, not a word against our young lady. The other servants would tear me in pieces if they thought I had done her any injury. It was scarcely her fault. It was through an accident.”

“An accident ?”

"Yes, my Lord. Miss Diana, driving out in her pony-chaise, found him lying insensible by the road side. She brought him to the Haugh, where he remained till the very morning of the day on which the Colonel returned."

Walter, who though absent at the time had possessed himself of all the facts, now proceeded to detail to the Marquis much of what the reader already knows.

There could be no absolute harm in the affair, so far as regarded Diana in the eyes of any ordinary and honourable man; but there was enough to inspire Monte-Cerro with jealous rage and alarm.

"Thanks, good Walter, for your information," he said. "I will remember my promise, and not use the information injudiciously. Now, show me to the Colonel."

The valet did so, and as he left him at the door said, "Before you leave the Haugh, I have yet something else to say to you, of even more importance than what I have now told you."

"Can you not speak now?" asked the Marquis, stopping short, his hand on the door.

"No, first see the Colonel and Miss Diana. Perhaps I shall have no occasion to speak."

The Marquis entered the room in no pleasant mood, leaving the crafty and observant valet outside.

"I think my Lord Marquis will find," he muttered, "that if, as a rival, he vanquishes, drives away, Valentine Montaigne, there will remain another not so easily disposed of. A rival, and well supported, too, with a friend at court, in the shape of the lady's own heart."

CHAPTER XXIX.

MONTE-CERRO PROPOSES.

“WELCOME, my Lord Marquis,” said Colonel Featherstonehaugh, when the former was ushered into his presence. “I am most happy to see you,” at the same time he half rose to receive his visitor.

“Don’t rise, Colonel—don’t rise,” said the Marquis, preventing him. “Just rest as you are, and I will take a seat beside you. I myself know what the gout is: perhaps, indeed, I have chosen an inauspicious time to see you and speak on a subject near my heart.”

“By no means—by no means. It is true I occasionally have a sharp twinge; but I never allow the gout to interfere with me in any way except as regards locomotion, and in that respect I am forced to yield. However, do not fear that I shall fail to pay all due attention to what you have to say to me. Pray proceed.”

“I said, Colonel, it was a subject near to my heart.”

The Colonel nodded his head, and after a few moments’ hesitation the other went on.

“Your daughter is the subject on which I wish to speak to you.”

“Ah! Diana. A beautiful and accomplished girl—a good girl: my daughter, and heiress of the house of Featherstonehaugh. A prince of

the blood royal might feel honoured in her alliance," said the Colonel.

"On my soul, this proud man rates his family name and his daughter's worth at a high value. However, I have set my heart on winning her, and at all hazards I will do so," thought the Marquis.

Then he said aloud, "Well, Colonel, I will come to the point at once; for you know I am a plain spoken man. You are probably aware that I spring from a family as ancient as your own, and that my estate and rank are such as to entitle me to ask of you your daughter's hand, without being accused of presumption."

"What you say is perfectly true, my Lord. So far as I am concerned, you have my consent to woo and win Diana for your bride; moreover, you shall have my good wishes for your success. As I said, just now, she is worthy of a prince of the blood royal, but if you are fortunate enough to win her consent mine shall not be wanting."

"And do you think my suit will prove successful with the lady?"

"I see no reason," was the reply, "why she should decline an alliance with you."

"Ah! Colonel, there is the question. You say you see no reason why she should decline an alliance with me."

"I do. The matter must be placed in a proper light before her, the advantages of an alliance with yourself, a man of rank, wealth, and ancient lineage. I will hint it to her how your estates join mine, and that you are the largest landholder in Hampshire. I and those accursed Montaigne's run next to you in the extent of our estates; but a union between our families, and consequently of wealth and power, would entirely

swamp the Montaignes, and their influence in the county would be overpowered, in fact we should hold complete sway, political and otherwise, and could certainly return both members of Parliament for the county."

"It is of one of the Montaigne's, Colonel, I wish to speak to you."

"Of the Montaignes!" cried the Colonel, excitedly, "the hereditary, and deadly enemies of my family! You can have nothing to say of my daughter in connexion with a Montaigne."

"Yes, of your daughter and Valentine Montaigne."

"Of Valentine—Montaigne's second son!" cried the Colonel. "What of him and Diana, sir? In what way can you couple the two names? Speak out!"

"I will speak out." Monte-Cerro paused for a moment or two, and then, seeming to make up his mind, said abruptly, "I think Valentine Montaigne is in love with your daughter Diana, and I fear that she views his passion with favourable eyes."

The Colonel rose from his couch, careless of the diseased foot. He did not start up rapidly like a rash excitable boy, but slowly and deliberately, like a strong man in his wrath, and stood before the Marquis.

"My Lord Marquis," he said, the black frown of the Featherstonehaughs settling on his harsh and rugged face, "beware of your words! You tread on dangerous ground."

"I am aware of it, Colonel," replied the other calmly. "I believe, I have good reason for what I say."

"Good reason," said the Colonel in a deep and

gloomy voice. "Good reason to say that my daughter looks on Valentine Montaigne with favourable eyes! Sooner would I see them closed in death than they should look with favour on a Montaigne. But it is too incredible. Even if Valentine Montaigne presumed to speak to my daughter, she could not, would not dare to favour his suit. Your reason for these thoughts, Marquis?" cried the Colonel fiercely.

His visitor replied calmly, "Colonel Featherstonehaugh, to give you all my reasons would be difficult if not impossible; but I think I can say enough to convince you my words are not those of an idle babbler. It is doubtless true that a feeling of jealousy quickened my perception, and, as the poet says:—

"Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmation strong
As proofs of Holy Writ."

"I want none of your trifles or fancies, I want facts; give me facts to justify your words."

"I will. To commence, a few weeks ago at the ball at Winchester I asked for the honour of dancing with Miss Featherstonehaugh; she declined, saying she was already engaged, and to my utter astonishment, she danced three times in succession with Valentine Montaigne. Afterwards he took her in to supper, and I was unable to obtain another word with her that night."

"Do you tell me," said the Colonel in a deep stern voice, "that she danced three times with Valentine Montaigne?"

"I have said so."

"And he took her into supper?"

"He did."

"May heaven's curses overwhelm him." The Colonel in his anger seemed entirely to forget his bad foot, and paced to and fro muttering impatiently: "To dance—to dance with him three times. To dare to dance with him at all! This must be put a stop to at once and for ever—"

Thereupon he rang the bell furiously, and his valet Walter promptly appeared—so promptly, indeed, as to afford ground for the belief that he was not far from the door as the preceding conversation was going on.

"Walter," said the Colonel, "let Miss Featherstonehaugh be informed that I wish to speak to her instantly."

"Ah, ah!" said the Marquis to himself. "now I will seek a pretence to withdraw. I have fired the train; but there is no reason for me to stay and witness the explosion. In my absence he will speak more harshly to Diana, terrify her more by threats and passion than if I were present."

"Colonel," he continued aloud, "you will excuse me if I go to your stables just to look after my horse. I am afraid he has fallen lame on the off foreleg. I galloped him over the hard road coming here, and fancied he pulled up tender, to say the least of it, and I am a little anxious about him as he is my favourite horse."

"Oh, certainly. I will order a groom to attend you."

"I thank you, Colonel; there is no necessity for that. I can find my way. You forget how often I have had the pleasure of visiting your stables."

He then went off, leaving the Colonel still moodily pacing up and down muttering to himself.

Diana entered shortly. "You sent for me, papa," she said inquiringly. The Colonel seated himself on the couch and said, briefly, and sternly, as he pointed to a spot about two yards distant, "I did. Stand you there. I have that to say, which you must hear and heed."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE VENDETTA.

DIANA, knowing her father, was well aware that he was in one of his blackest moods, and could not avoid coupling this sudden summons and harsh peremptory order, "Stand there," with the visit of the Marquis.

But she guessed not the real truth, and her father's first words, spoken in his sternest manner, almost overwhelmed her.

"Diana, are you acquainted with Mr. Valentine Montaigne?"

Her mind, her thoughts, were all in a whirl instantly.

"What can my father know? What does he suspect? Is it possible that he can have heard of Valentine's presence here, or of my harmless flirtation with him since?" she wondered.

"Answer me, Diana!" cried the Colonel, impatiently, "don't stand there fiddling with your apron-strings. Are you acquainted with Mr. Valentine Montaigne?"

In great confusion, she faltered out: "With Valentine Montaigne, papa? Well, I have met him."

"No prevarication, girl. Have you any acquaintance with the man—any intimacy whatever?"

Diana, now pale and trembling, utterly broken

down under her father's stern manner and glance, could only answer in broken sentences :

"I could not help it, papa ; I could not be rude to him. It was the Lord Lieutenant who introduced him to me at the county ball."

"Have you seen him since ?"

"Only once or twice," murmured Diana, in still greater confusion, not daring to look her father in the face.

"Enough, enough !" cried the Colonel. "I have heard too much."

With these words he rose to his feet and grasped the terrified girl by the arm.

"Oh, papa, dear, your foot ! Mind your foot !" cried Diana.

"Confound my foot ! Mind not that, but see that you heed my words," shouted the Colonel, with savage fury. "Dare not to have anything to say or do with any man, woman, or child of the house of Montaigne, our hereditary and deadly foes, on whom may perdition rest now and for ever."

"Oh, papa !" cried Diana, hysterically. "Why this malediction—this fury—against the Montaignes ?"

"You ask me why ? Do you not know they are our ancient foes and that a vendetta against them, fiercer than any that ever raged in Corsica, has had place in the hearts of the Featherstonehaughs for generations ?"

Diana, now somewhat recovering her self-possession, replied sadly :

"Alas ! I know it ; but the reason for such frightful blind hatred I never knew."

"I will tell you as much as it behoves you to know. The feud began in olden times, before the

wars of the Roses. Our ancestors fought, bled, and died in upholding the red rose of Lancaster. At a battle, resulting in disaster to our cause, our house supplied a squadron of horse and two hundred men-at-arms. These were led to the field by our ancestor, Geoffrey Featherstonehaugh, who fought with his troops next in the line of battle to the head of the house of Montaigne and his men. In the hottest of the conflict, the Montaigne, with his men, deserted our standard and went over to the foe, leaving Geoffrey Featherstonehaugh in sore peril. So disastrous did the desertion of Montaigne prove, that Geoffrey barely escaped being made prisoner by the enemy, and afterwards was, by his own side, accused, attainted, condemned, and executed for the treason of the coward Montaigne. 'Sdeath, to think that a Featherstonehaugh should have perished on the scaffold through the treason of an accursed Montaigne! Is not the thought enough to make my blood boil—to cause me to hate the accursed brood to the end of time?"

The Colonel again rose, and, despite his bandaged foot, again paced angrily to and fro.

Diana looked on in silent terror, not daring to speak to her father in his present mood.

The Colonel stopped before her, and went on, speaking hastily, but in a deep stern voice, every word of which went to her heart:

"But this was not the only one of our house who perished by the executioner's axe through the perfidy of the Montaignes. During the desperate struggle between the Royalists and the Puritans in the time of Charles I., my great grand-sire, a gallant and loyal cavalier, fought bravely for his king. When at last fortune had decided

against the royal cause, and all hope was over, he sought safety in flight, and by keeping himself secluded, hoped to escape the vengeance of Cromwell. Again was a Featherstonehaugh betrayed by a Montaigne. Archibald Montaigne, who had already deserted a losing cause, and gone over to the Roundheads, completed his treachery by betraying the retreat of Sir Jasper Featherstonehaugh, and pursuing him with malignant greed, by his machinations procured his execution, and the confiscation of his estates, a large slice of which formed the reward for the thrice-dyed traitor, Archibald Montaigne. These, together with many other treasons, go to make up the long roll of injuries inflicted by members of the Montaigne family on the Featherstonehaughs. What I have told you ought to satisfy you that I have good and sufficient reason for my implacable and deadly hatred to all of the accursed race."

The Colonel seated himself, and remained moodily silent for a space.

Diana plucked up courage enough to speak.

"Alas!" she said, "that offences committed generations ago should keep alive in men's breasts the fires of revenge ages after the injured and the wrong-doer lie mouldering in their tombs."

Her father again spoke.

"Diana, having shown you that the memory of injuries and treason committed in the past is still cherished in my breast, and that for these offences there can be no forgiveness, I will now speak of the present and the future. Take you heed of my words. You are not only my daughter, but at present the last of the proud race of Featherstonehaugh. Now, listen, and pay attention to what I am about to say. Should you, Diana

Featherstonehaugh, my daughter and heiress, dare to look with favourable eyes on any man, an enemy of our house, or any man of whom I disapprove, though I cannot slay you, being a woman and my daughter, the man shall die. Should a Montaigne presume to aspire to your hand, I would have his life, even though my soul's salvation should be perilled by the act. Dare to encourage Valentine Montaigne, and I will disown and drive you from my door. And as for him, I will slay him as I would a wolf."

The Colonel rose, and again grasping her fiercely by the arm, pointed to an escutcheon over the fire-place.

"See our proud motto—mark what it says. *Aut auri aut sanguinis profusus*—prodigal alike with blood or gold. See to it, Diana, for I swear by the great God in heaven that should you venture to disobey me, the man shall die, though I shed rivers of blood to compass his death."

"Oh, papa—papa—papa!" cried Diana, sinking on her knees by the couch, and bursting into tears, "you terrify me."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MARQUIS URGES HIS SUIT ON DIANA.

THE Marquis of Monte-Cerro, on leaving Colonel Featherstonehaugh, made his way to the stables, not that he had in reality any cause for anxiety as to his horse, but because he wished to be away during the Colonel's interview with his daughter, which, after what he had said, he felt sure would be a stormy one.

"I will give him a quarter of an hour," he said to himself, "and then, while yet the memory of her father's fierce anger is fresh in her mind, I will obtain an interview with the fair Diana herself, and it will be strange indeed if I do not urge my suit with good effect, and, at least, gain her permission to address her as a suitor for her hand."

Fortune, on this occasion, seemed inclined to favour the Marquis; for, on returning to the hall, he requested to be shown up to the drawing-room, intending thence to send a message to Diana asking for an interview.

As it happened, when he entered the drawing-room, she was there, and starting up from the chair where she had been seated by the fire, confronted him with a look almost of terror.

Shrinking back, she cried, in a startled tone:

"My Lord Marquis, you will find papa in the great hall. I beg you will excuse me. I have a headache—I am not well."

"Indeed, Miss Featherstonehaugh," said the Marquis smiling, and bowing with ceremonious politeness, "you appear startled—bewildered. I trust that I have not been the cause of alarm, or," he added with meaning, "is it possible that the black Colonel has been giving his daughter, the fair Diana, a taste of his fierce temper?"

This speech, notwithstanding the suave manner in which it was spoken, greatly discomposed Diana.

She knew not how to reply, and again saying,

"Excuse me, my Lord," endeavoured to escape from the room.

This, however, he prevented.

"Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said, "I must beg your indulgence for a few minutes. I was just about sending to request the favour of an interview with you, for I wish to speak to you on a subject which I have near at heart."

"An interview with me, my Lord?" cried Diana, not knowing what to say. "I trust you will excuse me—I am so agitated—I am too nervous. It is, indeed, too true that I have had a conversation with papa, and"—here she forced a faint smile—"you know at times he is somewhat hot-tempered."

"I trust the subject of conversation was not an unpleasant one," said the Marquis slowly, and with meaning.

Diana could scarcely fail to perceive this, and thought to herself—

"There is more in his words than meets the ear. Can he suspect anything? I declined to dance with him at the county ball, and danced three times with Valentine Montaigne. I remember now that he was present, and looked anything

but well pleased. I fancy that my father's anger has been fired by his tale-bearing and insidious words. The bare thought makes me hate him more than ever."

These were her thoughts, but commanding herself, she replied as calmly as she could :

"I trust you will pardon and excuse me, my Lord. The fact is, my friend, Isabel, is waiting for me in her boudoir, and requires my assistance. When a lady's toilet is in question, I trust that your lordship will accept it as a sufficient excuse."

But he was not to be thus baffled.

"Pardon, Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said, placing himself between her and the door. "I can no longer refrain from uttering words I have long wished to speak. I have your father's consent to address you. Indeed, it is at his request I now do so, and"—here he again contrived to throw a deep malicious meaning into his words—"surely you do not wish to arouse his anger."

Diana started and turned pale. Too well she guessed the import of his crafty words.

"Ha!" she said to herself, "with my father's consent! At his desire! It is as I feared. He wishes me to marry this hateful man. But I must listen. I dare not excite my father's anger in his present mood."

Then, summoning all her dignity and self-command to her aid, she moved with quiet grace to the sofa, and there took her seat.

"Speak, my Lord," she said, "say what you have to say, but I beg of you be brief."

She did not invite him to be seated, a circumstance which did not escape his notice, and standing before her, he proceeded :

"Miss Featherstonehaugh, you will remember that I said I wished to speak to you on a subject near to my heart. This morning, I sought your father's permission to address you as a suitor for your hand. He freely gave it; and, moreover, was good enough to say that he should prefer me as a son-in-law to any man he knew, and"—again the Marquis emphasised his words—"would use all his influence in my favour. I trust, however, fairest Diana, there will be no necessity for the exercise of any such influence, that my deep devotion, and your own kind heart, may sufficiently and successfully plead my cause for me."

At the conclusion of his speech, he gracefully fell on one knee, and attempted to take her hand.

Diana was now quite distracted, and scarce knew what to do or say.

Snatching away her hand, she cried, in broken sentences:

"No, no, my Lord—it can never be. Pray, rise, it is hopeless—believe me, it is useless."

Though thus rebuffed, the Marquis was by no means disconcerted, and succeeded in gaining her hand.

"Say not so, sweetest Diana," he pleaded. "Why can it never be? and why should my love be hopeless?"

Diana seemed to gather sudden thought and resolution, and, snatching away her hand, cried, almost fiercely:

"It is useless to question me! Let it suffice that I can never be your wife!"

Still kneeling at her feet, however, the Marquis persisted.

"Nay, fairest Diana, do not say you never can be mine. Let me hope—"

She interrupted him impetuously :

"My Lord, I have said that your wishes can never be gratified—that I can never be your wife. I repeat my words."

"Stay ; speak not so harshly to your humble adorer. Let me beg that you will reconsider your words."

"Once more, I repeat to you, my Lord, I can never be anything more to you than a friend."

Still the Marquis persistently urged his suit, in spite of the succession of rebuffs he received.

"Why not, at least, give me hope to win a dearer title than friend. I know that I am unworthy of your favour, as must needs be the highest in the land, royalty itself, fairest Diana. Nevertheless, there are some points which I venture to urge in my favour. I am wealthy, your equal in rank ; my family is as ancient as your own. Your father favours my suit. Why, then, can I never hope to call you wife ? Give me a reason, I beg, that I may combat it."

"A reason !" cried Diana. "You ask me for a reason. You shall have one—an all-sufficient one. I do not love you, my Lord."

He now rose, and laughing lightly, said :

"Love—ha ! ha ! What nonsense—love ! Love ! 'tis but a word, a name, a myth, a fond invention of poets and dreamers, a silly fancy, fitted only for fools."

Diana now said, sharply :

"Is that why you profess a passion for me. Surely you are neither poet, dreamer, nor fool ?"

Thought his Lordship—

"Ah ! she had me on the hip there with her sharp tongue and ready wit. However, I will not

be thus beaten off—again will I return to the attack.”

“Diana, for you must allow me to call you so,” he said, “at least, I beg of you one poor favour—a favour which you cannot refuse—which you are bound to grant in justice, and in deference to your father’s wishes.”

“What is this favour?” she asked coldly.

“That, at least, you will permit me to try to win your hand and your love. That, I think, is but a reasonable request.”

She mused for a moment or two. Anxious to escape, she yet saw no means without absolute rudeness—direct disobedience of her father’s wishes.

Then she bethought her of her friend.

“I will consult with Isabel,” she said to herself, “she is wiser than I am, and will be able to advise me.”

“Diana,” said the Marquis, “say you consent.”

“I cannot, my Lord ; give me time for consideration. I must think ; I am agitated and unnerved now. For the present, at least, you must excuse me. I feel ill and faint ; if you are a gentleman, you will not seek to prolong this interview.”

This was all but unanswerable, and he was forced to yield with as good a grace as possible.

“You will promise, at least, to see me again presently, after duly considering my proposal.”

“If you insist, I must promise,” she replied, glad at any price to escape from his presence, longing to seek counsel and consolation from her gentle friend, Isabel.

“In two hours time, then, I will await you here. You will again honour me with your presence ?”

"I will," said Diana, "since no less will satisfy you."

And then, bowing slightly, she hastily left the room.

As for the Marquis, he was in no amiable mood. He had urged his utmost, had persisted almost to rudeness, and had hitherto been repulsed distinctly—ignominiously.

"She is more obstinate and determined than I thought," he said to himself. "I must press her yet closer and harder. Once I gain permission to address her as her suitor, the rest will, I doubt not, soon follow."

He ordered his horse to be saddled, and, mounting, rode off at a hard gallop, leaving word that he had a call to make, and would be back in less than two hours.

This was not the fact, but in his then frame of mind he could not rest, and by the sharp exercise of hard riding, sought to quiet his dissatisfied mind.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MONTE-CERRO RECEIVES A CONCESSION AND A
WARNING.

DIANA sought counsel with Isabel, and that young lady, timid as a fawn, gentlest of the gentle, advised her to meet the Marquis again boldly, defiantly if necessary.

Diana, thus schooled and nerved by the advice of her friend, met the Marquis on the second interview with much greater self-possession and coolness.

He was in the drawing-room, awaiting her.

"My Lord," she said, "I am here at your service."

There was something ironical in the manner with which she spoke these words.

The Marquis observed this, but, though secretly annoyed, showed no signs of it, and proceeded to urge his suit in the same suave, bland manner, with a quiet persistency which Diana found it most difficult to combat.

It was in vain she told him she did not love him—never could love him.

Of this he made very light.

"In time, fair Diana," he said, "your feelings will change in that respect—the due amount of regard will follow in good time. That the admired maiden should merge into the loved and honoured wife is as natural and invariable as

that the seed should develop into a plant or the bud expand into a rose."

Diana replied sharply :

"Love can never thrive beneath the cold wintry blast of indifference and aversion. The bright and genial sunshine of sympathy and reciprocity alone can nurture its early growth and foster it into maturity."

"Ah!" thought the Marquis to himself, as all his advances were again and again met by plain rebuff or sharp retort, "I have set myself a harder task than I anticipated, but I must and will persevere, in spite of the haughty beauty's bitter tongue. Fortified by her father's permission to woo her, sooner or later her consent must follow."

"Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said aloud, "though I still remain unconvinced by your words, for the present, I bow to your decision, and will forbear to further argue the point."

Diana was both pleased and surprised, and exclaimed briskly :

"That is well, my Lord, and will save much further trouble. And now permit me to withdraw."

"Stay a few moments yet, Miss Featherstonehaugh, and then I have done. I have one demand to make ere I take my leave."

"A demand!" she exclaimed in haughty surprise.

"Nay, I will say a request then," said Monte-Cerro. "I have one request to make, and not an unreasonable one. From time immemorial ladies have enjoyed the privilege of changing their minds. Some day, and perhaps ere long, it may be so with you."

"Never, never, never," reiterated Diana, emphatically, "on that point, my Lord."

Apparently nothing disconcerted by the vehemence of her words, he proceeded :

"Time only can prove. Meanwhile, Diana, all that I ask is permission to woo you, to win you if I can."

"What absurdity !" cried Diana, with an air of annoyance. "Why seek permission to attempt an impossibility ? To give you the faintest hope would be but trifling with you on my part, and it is sheer folly on yours to waste time in a hopeless pursuit."

The Marquis now assumed a grave and severe manner.

"Diana Featherstonehaugh," he said, "listen to me. That which I request is most reasonable. When your father asks me how speeds the suit he gave me leave to urge, am I to tell him that his daughter absolutely refuses to listen to the man of whom he has approved as a suitor for her hand ? Will you compel me to suggest to him that some unworthy rival stands in my path ? You must know how well pleased he would be to receive such a hint."

These words, spoken slowly, deliberately, with deep meaning and emphasis, fell on Diana's understanding and ears with crushing force. She turned away to hide the emotion in her face.

"Oh heavens !" she said to herself, "how shall I escape this man ? What does he know, or rather what does he suspect, for I am innocent of all evil, even in thought ? Yet must I give him smooth words and appear to consent to his request, though were he to woo from now till

doomsday he could not win my heart. Anything to ward off my father's terrible anger."

Suddenly she turned round and faced him.

"My Lord," she cried, "I have told you that I do not love you, and that to seek to win my heart and hand is folly and waste of time on your part. Yet—"

"If I fail, mine will be the loss—mine the unrequited toil—mine the sorrow and anguish of mind," interrupted the Marquis. "But I shall conquer, and you shall yet be Marchioness of Monte-Cerro. Say you consent."

"I scarce know how to reply. I feel it can never be. I tell you honestly and fairly, as becomes an honourable maiden, and yet still you press me."

Seizing her hand before she could prevent him, he cried :

"You consent ? Say you consent, sweet Diana."

Freeing herself, she replied passionately :

"Since nought else will satisfy you, have your own way and begone with you, madman that you are. Fool yourself and waste your labour to your heart's content ; but blame me not when failure follows."

She attempted to leave the room, but he again seized her hand, and, in spite of her resistance, raised it to his lips and kissed it.

"Thanks, fairest Diana," he cried triumphantly ; "Marchioness of Monte-Cerro that is to be. Victory awaits me, and you, my queen of beauty, shall at hymen's altar bestow upon me the crown for which I strive."

"Until that hour arrives," said Diana in a tone of cool indifference, "reserve your raptures ; I

cannot, will not, listen to more now. Release my hand, I insist."

She then hurriedly left the room.

Standing with his back to the fireplace, the Marquis thus soliloquized :

"I had difficulty enough in wringing even that slight concession from the proud beauty ; but it is enough for my present purpose. Her father's favour will enable me to keep all other suitors at a distance. Far and wide will I make it known that the Marquis of Monte-Cerro is the accepted suitor for her hand, approved by her father. Bold will be the man who dares to interfere where the black Colonel is concerned, for he would be sure to make the quarrel his own ; and all men know how it fares with those who engage with Hector Featherstonehaugh in affairs of honour."

The valet Walter now entered.

"My Lord, my master presents his compliments, and wishes to know if you will honour him by remaining to dinner ?"

"Tell the Colonel I shall be most happy. Stay a moment though ; a few words with you. You remember that you said this morning that you could impart to me yet further information concerning your young mistress. From your words and manner, I gathered that you referred to another rival to the hand of the fair Diana. Speak out boldly, man ; do not mistrust either my prudence or my liberality."

"My Lord," said the valet, after a few moments hesitation, "you have indeed behaved handsomely to me. I will speak out boldly, and would have you heed my words, strange as their import may seem. Keep your eye on Valentine Montaigne

and his movements, for I feel assured that my young mistress regards him with favour. But your watchfulness must not stop there, for to my mind there is another who is likely to prove a more dangerous rival than he."

"Another!" cried the Marquis. "You amaze me. Whom do you mean? Speak out."

"Whom do I mean? Prepare yourself for a surprise, my Lord. I mean the new doctor at the village of Festonhaugh, Andrew Lorimer by name."

"An obscure country surgeon! It is too absurd. Why, Walter, you must be mad."

"As you please, my Lord. Heed my words or not, at your choice. But you will remember that I warned you."

Thought Monte-Cerro to himself:

"The fellow speaks as though from sure conviction." Then he added aloud:

"What reason have you for your extraordinary words?"

"My own judgment and perception, my Lord," was the reply. "I have watched my young lady closely, and, moreover, I am on the best of terms with my lady's own maid."

The Marquis replied thoughtfully:

"Startling as your words are, I will remember them. When you have further communications to make—bearing in mind those golden objects of art, others of which I can place at your disposal—let me know at once. Now, lead me to your master."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LORIMER AND VALENTINE MONTAIGNE.

VALENTINE MONTAIGNE from the time when he became the guest of Andrew Lorimer to the day when convalescent, though still weak, he was able to leave, had been treated not only with the best skill, but with the utmost consideration and kindness.

The young surgeon was himself a plain liver, frugal even ; but that fact did not stand in the way of his patient and guest being supplied with every luxury he could require in the shape of either food or wine.

Valentine Montaigne, of an enthusiastic and generous temperament, fully appreciated the tender kindness of Lorimer ; and on the day he left, sound in mind and limb (save a little weakness), he cordially pressed the young surgeon's hand, and, with eyes moist from emotion, declared in all truth and sincerity that he regarded him, and always should, as his greatest benefactor and dearest friend.

"Andrew Lorimer," he said, as with a parting grip of the hand he bade his host farewell, "I scarcely hope ever to be able to repay the deep service you have rendered me. Believe me, I will never forget your disinterested kindness—your generous humanity. Happen what may, so long as life remains to me, you have a sincere and

grateful friend in Valentine Montaigne. More than that, henceforth your friends shall be my friends, your enemies my enemies; the man, be he prince or peasant, who dares assail Andrew Lorimer, shall answer for it to Valentine Montaigne with his life's blood."

The young surgeon listened to Valentine's impassioned rhapsody with a patient smile on his face.

"Thanks for your proffered friendship, which I proudly accept, for I believe you are a true man," he replied. "As for enemies, I believe I have none, and I hope to the end of my life I never shall have any, but be permitted to pass through this earthly pilgrimage hating no man, and being hated by none."

"Truly, Andrew Lorimer," said Valentine earnestly, "if ever a man deserved to be loved by all, hated by none, it is yourself; but the best of men, saints and prophets of old, even of spotless and immaculate lives, have found enemies. So long as evil passions—jealousy, envy, malice—have place in the human breast, so long will men, good and honourable, be hated by the base and bad."

Lorimer assisted him to mount his horse, for he was still too weak to do so unaided, and, closely attended by a careful groom, he rode away towards his own home.

Although in many respects so utterly different in character and disposition, yet Lorimer and Montaigne were mutually attracted to each other, and a genuine friendship sprang up between them.

It was hard to help liking the dashing young squire, handsome, high-spirited, brave, and gener-

On these occasions his horse would be comous to an excess, and, moreover, as honourable as he was hot-tempered and reckless.

This last trait in his character—a passionate, almost ungovernable, temper—offered a strong contrast to the quiet temperament of Andrew.

The latter, however, was able to exercise great and beneficial influence over the impatient, almost quarrelsome, nature of Montaigne; and it seemed that, by example and constant intercourse, the disposition of Valentine was gradually becoming less unruly and more gentle.

Andrew Lorimer's professional duties precluded his visiting at the big house where dwelt Madame Montaigne and her sons. He had, however, promised that he would call whenever he should pass by or happen to be within a short distance.

On these occasions, somewhat few and far between, he was received with a most cordial welcome.

However, as Madame Montaigne and her son Jasper have but little to do with our story, which henceforth will centre almost entirely around the humble dwelling of the country surgeon and the ancient hall of Featherstonehaugh, we need say no more on the subject.

Valentine Montaigne, whose time was his own, was never happier than when mounted on a blood-horse and bound on a thirty mile ride, paid frequent visits to the young surgeon.

The evening was the time he generally chose, when Andrew Lorimer would have finished the ordinary round of his duties, and could only be alluded away by an accident or sudden illness.

mitted to the care of Andrew Lorimer's groom, and Valentine would join his friend in the latter's well-loved cup of tea, followed, after an interval, by a pipe of fragrant tobacco and a glass of well-mixed punch; for the young doctor, though moderate in the indulgence of all his tastes, was neither teetotaller nor bigot (synonymous terms almost), and by no means despised or thought it his duty to abstain entirely from the bounteous gifts sent by Providence for man's enjoyment.

Valentine Montaigne in his intercourse with Lorimer had no secrets, and spake his inmost thoughts with school-boy frankness.

The reader already knows that this gay young cavalier had not escaped unscathed the siren-like fascinations of Diana Featherstonehaugh.

He made no secret of the subject at all with Andrew Lorimer, but spoke quite freely in terms of passionate admiration of the "Black Colonel's" daughter.

At first this was an embarrassing subject to Andrew Lorimer, but he gradually schooled himself to perfect indifference, so far as he was concerned.

He was greatly disquieted with regard to his friend; for, aware of the deadly hatred in which Colonel Featherstonchaugh held all the house of Montaigne, he felt sure nought but misery and disaster could come of any attachment between a son of the one and a daughter of the other family.

When, however, he ventured on the delicate task of speaking on the matter to Valentine, that impetuous and hot-headed young man only laughed the subject off, declaring it was only a harmless flirtation, and that it was strange

indeed if a man could not admire and avow his admiration for the prettiest girl in the county.

When Lorimer would proceed to point out to him that the fierce Colonel, should he know it, would not look upon a flirtation or even an acquaintance between Valentine and his daughter as a harmless or trifling matter, then would Valentine fire up.

"What care I for Hector Featherstonehaugh, although they do call him the Black Colonel? I know that he is a practised and remorseless duellist, having already slain more than half a score with his pistol or rapier. The pitcher that goes often to the well is broken at last, and should he provoke the combat the last male of the Featherstonehaugh race may fall by the hand of a Montaigne."

"But even in that case," Lorimer urged more than once, "you will be no nearer your object, if that object be Diana Featherstonehaugh, for of course she could not marry the man who had slain her father."

Beyond this point Andrew Lorimer found it impossible to pursue the subject seriously, for the gay-hearted and hot-headed Valentine would persist in treating it as a joke.

"All's well that ends well," on one occasion he cried; "love laughs at locksmiths. Who knows that, spite of bolts and bars, I may not yet bear off the fair damsel from her father's gloomy hall, and fly with her on my saddle-bow over the hills and far away?"

And then with mock gravity:

"I suppose you know, friend Andrew, that we have in the Highlands of Scotland a small castle and estate, surrounded and guarded by a fierce

and bare-legged tenantry, to penetrate through whom with hostile intent, or without welcome, I would defy all the black Colonels in Christendom."

Now this mode of treating what he looked upon as a serious subject, discomposed and grieved the good-hearted young surgeon considerably.

On one occasion when it had been the topic of discussion, he spoke some parting words of caution and remonstrance to Valentine Montaigne, who had avowed his intention of attending a ball that evening, at which Diana would also be present.

"Good evening, doctor," cried Valentine, laughingly as he rode off; "I will call to-morrow and let you know how many times I danced with the heiress of Featherstonehaugh."

Andrew Lorimer stood for a few moments musing alone, and then walked slowly along the gravel path leading across the garden to the house-door, murmuring, with head bent down and eyes cast on the ground:

"Evil will come of this—misery and disaster, I greatly fear. Strange that the girl, though so lovely and fascinating, should be able to exercise such siren power on all who come within the sphere of her fatal charms of mind and person. Evil and anguish of mind will come of it yet, perchance to more than one—perchance even to myself. Pray heaven my sad forebodings may never be realised."

Thus communing with himself, he entered his humble dwelling. His old housekeeper, Margaret, noticed that her master was gloomy and out of sorts all that evening, and, thinking that he had made himself ill by overwork, compounded with

her own skilful hand a cordial posset, which she, good dame, felt sure would dispel his bodily fatigue and mental gloom.

Vainly Andrew Lorimer strove his hardest to drive away unpleasant thoughts by earnest study.

After an hour thus spent, he rose, put on his hat and cloak, went out, and walked quickly to and fro in the moonlight.

“Why this restlessness?” he asked himself; “this oppression of spirit. I feel as though there was something looming in the future, the shadow of which is now over me. I feel as though a climax in my fate approached.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

A COURIER FROM CUMBERLAND.

ON the next evening Andrew Lorimer expected that Valentine Montaigne would visit him as promised ; but for once he did not keep his word, and the surgeon judged that he had been detained or prevented.

Lorimer, still unable to get rid of the feeling of restlessness and uneasiness which had oppressed him even on the second day after his last conversation with young Montaigne, looked forward with anxiety to the evening.

“Surely he will come to-night,” he said to himself. “But why should I be anxious on the point ? What to me is the flirtation or love passage, if such there be, between him and Diana Featherstonehaugh ?”

He soon found an answer to the self-asked questions.

“He is my friend—my most dear and intimate friend. He is rash and headstrong. I would save him from the whirlpool of misery towards which, I fear, the fascinations of the siren of Featherstonehaugh are attracting him.

“And, besides, there can follow nothing but disaster—bloodshed, too probably—from any acquaintance between Valentine Montaigne and the Colonel’s daughter—a vain, foolish, and lovely girl, with all the charms and many of the faults

of the first woman, Eve. It is an act of kindness to interpose between her and that which may prove a fatal passion.

"Is it not my duty to endeavour at least to prevent what I know can but be productive of misery and anguish of mind?"

Andrew Lorimer was engaged in thus communing with himself, when the rattle of hoofs was heard, and a mounted man drew up at the gate.

"Dwells here one Doctor Andrew Lorimer?" was asked in a hoarse voice.

He went out himself, and beheld at the gate a man on a horse covered with sweat, and bearing evidence of a hard day's work.

The man appeared to be a courier, or mounted messenger, much used in those days, when the roads were frequently so bad as to be closed against wheeled vehicles—even his Majesty's mail being often brought to a standstill.

"My name is Andrew Lorimer. What would you with me? You would seem to have ridden far by the appearance of your horse."

"I have ridden for eight days with scarce any rest. From the north of Cumberland to the south of Hampshire is a rough and long journey."

"From Cumberland!" exclaimed the young surgeon, betraying sudden interest. "There is, or should be, but one man in Cumberland who knows of my whereabouts."

"Perhaps it was that man who sent me," said the messenger, dismounting; "at all events, I have a letter and a packet for you. He told me to ride hard, and spare not horse-flesh, giving me letters by which I could obtain changes on the road. He said, moreover, that you would receive

me gladly, and reward me well, when you heard the good news of which I am the bearer."

Lorimer's groom now appeared, and to his care the horse of the messenger was consigned, after the latter had unstrapped the valise from the saddle.

"Come in with me," said Andrew Lorimer, calmly leading the way into the house.

Entering his quiet and homely little room, where on the table the tea equipage was already laid, he lit the oil lamp on the mantel-shelf, and remaining standing himself, said :

"Pray be seated ; you must be weary after your long ride. You look hot, too ; probably you are athirst. I can offer you good ale."

And, without waiting for a reply, he called to Margaret, whom he heard in the passage, to bring in a jug.

The courier, disdaining mug or tankard, put the jug of "home-brewed" to his lips, and presently withdrew it—with a sigh—empty.

"Now for your news and the letter and documents you bring me. By whom were you sent ?"

"Joseph Lubbock of Carlisle," replied the man, "with this letter and a packet of papers," at the same time producing them.

"Oh ! the attorney. I know," said the young surgeon, taking the letter and packet in a slow, almost unwilling, manner. "I will examine these presently. Tell me the news ? What news do you bring me ?"

"Great news, glorious news, most noble sir ! I have to tell you, on the authority of Master Lubbock of Carlisle, that you are now the richest man and largest landowner in Cumberland."

CHAPTER XXXV.

ASTONISHING NEWS FROM CARLISLE.

ANDREW LORIMER, the letter and packet of papers in his hand, seated himself at the table, and called to his housekeeper.

"Margaret," he said, when she answered the summons, "get this good man some refreshment—food and some more ale—at once; any cold meat you have."

He then proceeded to read the letter, and afterwards to examine the packet of documents which the courier had brought.

Margaret was quick, whilst Doctor Lorimer was both slow and careful in his inspection of the documents; and so it happened that the messenger who brought them had done full justice to the viands before him, before his entertainer had opened and read the last of the red-tape bound papers.

When he had completed his task, he raised his head, and, looking the courier in the face, asked quietly:

"You expect and wish for a handsome reward in consideration of having ridden fast and hard to bring me the news and these papers?"

"I think I may," the man began; and was proceeding to speak further, when another horseman, pulling up at the gate, attracted his attention.

It was Valentine Montaigne.

"Oh, Lorimer!" he said, shaking his hand, "how are you? Ought to have been here yesterday, but could not very well. It was an exciting day with me, and I had a little affair of business in the evening."

Andrew Lorimer, turning to the messenger, said:

"You had best go and see to your horse; I will speak further to you presently. Meanwhile my housekeeper, Margaret, will see that you are properly lodged and provided for."

Turning to Valentine, when they were alone, he said inquiringly:

"An affair of business?"

"Well, then," was the laughing reply, "an affair of honour, if you like. It was certainly not altogether an affair of pleasure; for the Marquis is a very fair swordsman, and once he nearly succeeded in getting under my guard. However, 'all's well that ends well.' Myself escaping without a scratch, I ran him through the arm."

"Am I to understand from your words that you have fought a duel with the Marquis of Monte-Cerro?"

"That is exactly the fact, my boy. I wounded him, and remained myself master of the field, so to speak. Though, to give him his due, he wished to prolong the duel with pistols after he could no longer wield the sword."

"And the cause of the duel?" asked Lorimer, though he too well guessed.

"Well, the fact is, at the county ball the night before last, he took umbrage because a certain fair lady chose to bestow upon me her hand for several dances, refusing or slighting his Lordship.

His looks towards me were offensive and insulting ; and as you may guess, my dear Andrew, I did not wait for him to interpret them into words, but challenged him at once to explain his meaning. There is really nothing more to tell. Message sent, seconds chosen, time and place appointed, the clash of steel for a minute or so, and then one of the combatants bleeding, half-fainting, by reason of a severe flesh wound."

"And the lady on whose account the duel took place?" asked Lorimer, though again he knew too well.

"Why, Diana Featherstonehaugh, of course," replied Valentine lightly, "the handsomest girl in Hampshire."

"I am very sorry to hear it. Sorry for your sake, friend Valentine—sorry for the sake of Diana Featherstonehaugh. The duel and its result will, of course, be widely known and talked about."

"And why should you be sorry for that. I think it is rather a feather in my cap to fight and wound this dark, proud, gloomy Italian, who had been heard to boast that he was the best swordsman between the Alps and the kingdom of Naples."

"How rashly you talk, Valentine," said Lorimer reproachfully. "You forget that the cause of the duel will probably be the subject of gossip and scandal, and that must surely be a source of great trouble and embarrassment to Diana Featherstonehaugh."

"Not a bit of it. She told me in the course of the evening she detested the Marquis, who sought every opportunity to force his hateful suit upon her. I am quite sure she will be delighted to hear of the result."

Andrew Lorimer, seeing it was useless, forebore to pursue the subject.

Valentine asked suddenly :

“Who was that fellow here with you when I came in ? ”

“He has come a long journey, on an errand to me. I have no secrets from you, Valentine Montaigne ; seat yourself there under the lamp, and read this letter.”

Valentine took it, seated himself, and then proceeded to read aloud :

“CARLISLE.

“To Andrew Lorimer, Esquire.

“It is my painful duty to inform you that on the 12th of this month, your uncle, Sir Gordon Lorimer, Bart., and your brother, Master Seymour Lorimer, who was on a visit to Sir Gordon, were both drowned, on returning from hunting, in the attempt to cross a swollen stream.

“The bodies were recovered the next day.

“By this sad event the baronetcy reverts to your father, now Sir Egerton Lorimer, you being the next heir.

“Moreover, I have to inform you that, by virtue of the special provisions contained in the deed of entail executed by your grandfather, the estates of Glen Abbey and Arbroath, with all the moor and forest land, as also the freehold house and other property, comprising more than half the site of Carlisle, revert in fee-simple to you, your heirs, executors, and assignees for ever ; also the estates and mansion of Ambleside, now in the occupation of your father, Sir Egerton Lorimer, revert to you absolutely—the baronet, your father, inheriting nothing but the title, ac-

cording to the terms of the aforesaid settlement.

"As you are aware, honoured sir, I and my father and my grandfather before me have for generations acted for your family as attorneys and agents, and I humbly trust that you will extend to us the confidence we have enjoyed from your uncle and grandfather.

"I forward to you herewith copies of title-deeds, abstracts, mortgages, settlements, leases, copyhold agreements, bonds, &c., and all other documents relating to your magnificent estate.

"The estimated rent-roll is considerably over fifty thousand pounds; but I am of opinion that, by careful and judicious improvements, this princely income might be nearly doubled.

"Any sums of money you may require are immediately at your service, we having in hand between thirty and forty thousand pounds on accounts of the estate.

"Honoured sir, according to your urgent wish, as expressed by you to me when seven years ago you took your departure from Carlisle, I have kept inviolate in my own mind all knowledge of your movements and abode.

"It is believed in these parts that you perished in the Netherlands while army surgeon to one of his Majesty's regiments—the death of one of the same name having been duly reported in the Gazette.

"No one, save myself, is at present aware of your existence.

"Presuming on your supposed death, your father will, as your next heir, take possession of the estates.

"A short letter from you, honoured sir, signed

and witnessed, will, however, obviate all difficulty on that score.

"The messenger by whom I forward this letter and the documents is a discreet prudent man, and thoroughly trustworthy. He will, on receipt of your orders, ride back with all speed.

"Awaiting your commands, which shall be immediately and faithfully executed,

"I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

"THOMAS LUBBOCK."

"This is news, indeed!" exclaimed Valentine, as he finished the letter, and, rising, grasped Lorimer's hand. "Glorious news! I wish you all happiness, health, and long life to enjoy your estates and title."

Lorimer, however, seemed by no means elated at the sudden and unexpected change in his fortunes.

"There is only one cause for regret," pursued Valentine; "and, old friend, I am selfish enough to feel it. We shall lose you from amongst us; for, of course, you will immediately proceed to Cumberland, to take possession of your estates."

Andrew Lorimer made no immediate reply; but resting himself, and shading his eyes with his hand, leaned upon the table, and seemed to be in deep thought.

"All this must seem strange to you," he said presently; "the more so as, hitherto, I have said not a word concerning my origin, my family, my prospects. It is now time that I should speak and explain to you how it all came about.

"Ours is an old and honourable family, my uncle, Sir Gordon, of whose death I have just heard, being the tenth baronet. Unmarried and child-

less, the title would, of course, revert to my father, should he survive him, and then to my elder brother, whose sad death is also chronicled in this letter.

"The estates would have descended to him direct had he lived, as they now have to me, passing over my father, the present baronet.

"My brother was ever the favourite, both with my uncle and my father. My tastes and disposition were wholly obnoxious to them.

"With my brother it was quite the contrary. He was a man after their own heart—high-spirited, overbearing in temper, boisterous in all his habits and pursuits, of an eminently warlike spirit. They looked on him as one well worthy to inherit the family wealth and dignity.

"My brother and I were never good friends—for what reason I know not; for willingly I never gave him cause for offence.

"But poor Seymour and my uncle conceived a bitter dislike for me.

"However, I saw but little of them, and was always careful not to anger or vex them in any way, choosing rather to put up with many slights, some amounting almost to insults.

"My dear mother died when I was a lad of fifteen, and with her I lost my best friend; for, I grieve to say, my father regarded and treated me, if not with aversion, certainly with persistent coldness.

"Mine was not a happy youth. I was always studious, and had an eager longing to explore the difficult paths of science and knowledge. In due time, it was decided and arranged by my father and uncle that I should enter the King's service as an officer of cavalry.

"A younger son, and with no prospects of

wealth, it was necessary that I should adopt some profession ; and that of a soldier was the only one considered worthy for even a younger scion of the house of Lorimer by my proud uncle and scarcely less proud father.

“ But I had other views. I feel sure I am not a coward ; but my tastes are peaceful. The very thought of a soldier’s life was and is to me abhorrent.

“ Greatly to their indignation, I informed them I wished to study for the profession of medicine.

“ They laughed the idea to scorn. My father ordered me to give up any such degrading thoughts—bade me prepare to take up my commission so soon as I had arrived at the proper age.

“ But I was firm. They called me obstinate ; and though my father threatened to cast me off, to disown me, should I persist in my disobedience, I would not yield.

“ On coming of age, I had a small sum of money reverting to me by my mother’s settlement.

“ My father called me to him on the day of my majority, and bade me at once take up my commission, and follow out the career he had designed for me.

“ Then he put into force the oft-repeated threat :

“ ‘ You have now,’ he said, ‘ a sum of four hundred guineas coming to you under your late mother’s settlement ; you can go to Carlisle, and obtain them from Lawyer Lubbock. Take the money, and therewith, if it so pleases you, go study and pursue the sordid trade you have chosen. But out of my sight, Andrew Lorimer ; I never wish to see your face again. Henceforth you are a stranger in Cumberland. The name

you bear I cannot take from you ; but mark my words—from your uncle, from myself, you shall never receive a guinea nor inherit an acre. Begone.’”

Andrew Lorimer rose, having finished his narrative.

“Strange and mysterious are the ways of Providence,” he added. “My father’s last words—those with which he drove me from his presence—were to the effect that I should never inherit an acre of the land of Lorimer. And, behold ! through the neglect and carelessness of my uncle in not making a will or altering the entail, I have inherited all. And it is he, my stern and proud father, who is left in his old age almost penniless in the world.”

As he finished speaking, the sound of horse’s hoof falls was heard clattering along the hard road, and there drew up at Andrew Lorimer’s gate another visitor.

It was nearly dark, and he went out through the door, followed by Valentine, to see who had come.

The moment he had stepped across the threshold into the little garden, he stopped, started, and exclaimed :

“Diana Featherstonehaugh, by heaven !”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DIANA HEARS OF LORIMER'S GOOD FORTUNE.

VALENTINE MONTAIGNE was behind Lorimer and this prevented her perceiving him, dusk having faded into night.

"You will be surprised to see me, Doctor Lorimer, and at such a time."

"Pray come in, Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said, and bowing he led her across the passage into the house, where stood Valentine Montaigne in the full light of the oil lamp.

She started and drew back, half ashamed for a moment.

Valentine laughed in his gay, careless manner.

"Ah, Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said, "fairest of the fair, this is indeed an unexpected meeting."

For a moment her whole attention was directed to Valentine, Andrew Lorimer standing quietly by regarding them.

"Oh, Mr. Montaigne, how could you?" she cried, clasping her little gloved hands. "I have heard all about it. It is really dreadful."

Valentine smiled, almost laughed, evidently in excellent humour.

Probably he felt no little pleasure at this chance interview.

She raised her gold mounted and jewelled little riding whip, and exclaimed,

"Oh, you cruel man, I have a good mind to

horsewhip you. Fighting duels and trying to kill people! You are as bad—as bad—as bad—”

“As Colonel Featherstonehaugh,” he suddenly said. “In the will, if not in the deed, you mean to say, fair lady.”

The expression of Diana’s face changed instantly, and she coloured up with anger, or some other emotion aroused by his words.

He was as quick to observe and apologise, as he had been to offend.

“Ten thousand pardons, Miss Featherstonehaugh,” he cried. “I ought not to have spoken, so but the words seemed to jump from my throat almost without volition on my part. I really do believe that I have some mischievous imp or demon within me, who sometimes speaks without my leave, just for the purpose of getting me into trouble. Horsewhip me, do with me what you like, but say you pardon me.”

It was evident that the words had been uttered without intention of offence, and Diana would have been stern and exacting indeed could she have refused forgiveness to so gay and gallant a cavalier.

Still there was a change in her manner, and when next she spoke it was not in a playful mood. The memory of a certain duel she had witnessed came back to her mind, and caused her cheek to pale.

“It is a very dreadful subject,” she said earnestly, her eyes dilating, a shuddering, horrified look coming over her face. “The very word duel is, to me, terrible.”

Thought Valentine Montaigne,

“This is strange. ’Twas she who first mentioned the subject, and that in a playful manner.”

But he knew not that his mention of her father's name brought back to her mind the memory of a fatal duel fought on the lawn of the Haugh, which she, from her window, witnessed.

This terrible memory seemed to grow upon her, to become more vivid each instant.

Her voice was quite tremulous, her face was very pale, when, turning to Andrew Lorimer, she said,

"Ha ! Doctor Lorimer, you know, I told you of that fatal duel when you were at the Haugh. Whenever I think of it, it rises before me like a dreadful vision. I see it now. I feel inclined to shut my eyes and scream."

Lorimer remembered how serious were the consequences when last she alluded to the subject. Hysterics and fainting fits at one time seemed even to threaten life, and with ready skill he hastened to change the conversation.

"I trust you are not the bearer of bad news—that it is not illness or accident at the Haugh which brings you here."

"No, not accident nor serious illness, Doctor Lorimer; at least, I hope and believe it is not serious. My father, as you are probably aware, has long suffered from attacks of gout. Since the accident to his foot which you so skilfully treated, all the fury of the gout seems to concentrate in the injured ankle, and his sufferings are more excruciating than ever. That is the worst news I bring you, doctor, with the addition that the Colonel wishes you to come over at once and take his case in hand. Indeed, a week ago he commissioned me to ride over to Festonbaugh on the same errand, but there came a lull in the attack, and he hoped it was about to pass off. But the

fell demon seems unwilling to relinquish his prey, and to-day again he is in dreadful pain."

Bowing gravely Lorimer replied,

"I am fully at the service of the Colonel in my professional capacity, Miss Featherstonehaugh."

Diana was about to speak, but Valentine Montaigne broke in.

He was anxious to turn the conversation from either Colonel Featherstonehaugh or the subject of the duel, being aware of the mistake he had made, and anxious to repair it.

"Miss Featherstonehaugh," he cried, "of course you are not aware that our friend Lorimer here has received extraordinary news, news that will doubtless cause him to relinquish his profession."

Diana looked from Lorimer to Montaigne in silent wonder.

"Indeed," she said, interrogatively. "If it is good news, I am sure I am glad to hear it."

Andrew Lorimer was embarrassed, besides being a little annoyed, for he was by no means prepared, at all events at present, to acquaint Diana Featherstonehaugh with the great change in his fortunes.

Addressing Valentine, he said, with as much coldness as he could assume,

"You speak too hastily. I beg that in matters which concern myself only, and in which I must use my own judgment, you will not jump at conclusions."

But Valentine was quite irrepressible.

"Oh! nonsense, my dear fellow," he said. "We are all aware of your goodness of heart and humility, but there must be a limit to everything of that sort. Whoever heard of the absolute

possessor of an estate of fifty thousand a year, and at the same time heir to a baronetcy, continuing to be a country surgeon?"

Valentine Montaigne had wished to divert her thoughts from their previous channel, and in this he succeeded to admiration.

Diana was lost in amazement.

"Owner of an estate—heir to a baronetcy?" she murmured, looking from one to the other in blank wonderment.

"I assure you it is quite true," exclaimed Valentine smiling.

Andrew Lorimer said never a word for some time. He was deeply chagrined at this abrupt disclosure of his altered fortunes by Valentine, and scarce knew what to say.

To deny the fact was impossible, without an absolute lie, which was utterly foreign to his nature; and yet the avowal of the truth of the rash young man's words was very, very disagreeable.

"Come, Andrew, old fellow," said Valentine, gaily, "we know how sensitive and modest you are. Please to remember we are your friends, and, for heaven's sake, don't stand there looking as if you had received notice of execution instead of news that you are the fortunate possessor of wealth in the present, and an old title in the future. Allow us to offer you our congratulations. Ring for wine and glasses. I am sure Miss Featherstonehaugh will join me in toasting the future Sir Andrew Lorimer, the richest landowner in Cumberland."

The amazement and bewilderment of Diana had now reached its height.

"The heir to a baronetcy! The richest landowner in Cumberland!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

VALENTINE SPEAKS TO DIANA OF HIS ENCOUNTER
WITH MONTE-CERRO.

THE idea that Andrew Lorimer was heir to a baronetcy and the richest landowner in Cumberland was so new to Diana Featherstonehaugh, that her mind was scarcely able to grasp it.

As for Andrew Lorimer, he was forced to yield. In his capacity of host he could not refuse the last request.

Valentine Montaigne's frank impetuous manner was irresistible.

He rang the bell, ordered the wine, and then turning to Diana said,

"You must excuse our friend's enthusiasm and impetuosity on my behalf. You will, I hope, believe me when I tell you that the news I have received is no cause of rejoicing to me, if for no other reason than that it includes the deaths of my uncle and elder brother."

"Is it then true?" murmured Diana.

"True? Of course it is true," said Valentine, quickly. "Sit you down, friend Lorimer, and I will read you the letter from the lawyer in Carlisle which announces to our friend his changed fortunes."

With these words he took up the letter, and placed himself in a position to read it aloud.

"No, no," cried Lorimer, half attempting to

take it from him. "I beg of you—nay, I insist—"

"Oh, Doctor Lorimer," interrupted Diana laying her little hand upon his arm, "do, I entreat, allow Mr. Montaigne to read it. I ask it of you as a favour to me."

There was a bright flush on her cheek, and her beautiful eyes sparkled with pleased excitement.

Gazing him full in the face in a languishing, pleading manner, her eyes looking into his, she made him feel her power.

His mind—his soul—call it what you will, seemed to tremble within him under the influence of the fascinating siren.

He yielded absolutely, without condition or reserve.

With a faint smile he seated himself.

"Do as you please," he said, addressing neither one or the other of them in particular, "I am your humble obedient servant."

Then Valentine Montaigne proceeded to read the lawyer's letter, which he did slowly, distinctly, emphasizing every point of importance.

Diana sat and listened.

A change came over her face as her ears drank in, sentence by sentence, the absolute purport of the lawyer's letter.

To say a change came over her mind would scarcely be true.

The news came upon her with stunning effect, seeming to deaden her faculties.

Her mind was almost like a sheet of blank paper.

As regarded Andrew Lorimer all previous impressions must be now obliterated.

She had to regard him as heir to a baronetcy,

a man of great wealth, the absolute owner of broad estates.

A marvellous change, indeed, and one she was unable all at once to realise.

It was such a sudden and complete overturning of all previous notions.

An unknown village doctor, a country surgeon, poor and of no family : heir to an old baronetcy, the largest landowner in Cumberland.

When she entered his humble abode she regarded him in the former light.

And now, five minutes having scarcely elapsed, she was called upon to look at him, to think of him as the latter.

She was quite unable to appear at her ease, so she made up her mind to deliver her message, and make her escape as soon as possible.

After murmuring a few words of congratulation, she paused to think for a moment and frame a speech excusing herself for leaving so abruptly.

Valentine Montaigne, however, broke in with his cheery voice before she could speak.

"From what I have heard of Cumberland, and especially the country about Carlisle, where your new property principally lies, I understand you'll be a very rich man, friend Andrew. Your rent roll, I fancy, will overtop that of all the landholders about here—ourselves, Colonel Featherstonehaugh, and even this arrogant, half-bred Italian, Monte-Cerro, whom I had the honour of running through the arm. By the way, Miss Featherstonehaugh, have you heard particulars of the affair?"

At this moment Lorimer's old housekeeper entered, and informed her master that his services

were required down the village, for that the child of a labouring man had been seized with convulsions.

Andrew Lorimer begged to be excused, took his hat, and went out at once, leaving Diana and Valentine Montaigne together.

The latter seemed quite contented with the situation, and as for Diana, not having yet delivered her message, she felt constrained to remain till his return.

Valentine Montaigne repeated his question concerning the duel between Monte-Cerro and himself.

"Oh, yes," said Diana, blushing slightly, and looking confused. "Ill news travels apace."

"Ill news," cried Valentine, "Perhaps, then, you would have considered it good news had I been wounded in place of his lordship?"

"Oh, no; not at all. I cannot bear him, and you know it, Mr. Montaigne. It was of duels in general I spoke. The very name—the thought—of a duel is to me hateful, terrible, as you know."

"Your pardon, Miss Featherstonehaugh. In a great measure, I agree with you; but there are cases and causes which render an affair of honour inevitable."

"And what might have been the cause in this particular case?" asked Diana.

It was an imprudent question on her part—that is, if she did not wilfully offer to Valentine this chance of paying high-flown compliments and making amorous speeches to herself, an art in which he was proficient.

"The cause, Miss Featherstonehaugh, was a lady," he replied.

"Indeed!"

"A most holy, righteous, and lovely cause of

quarrel. A lady, young and beautiful, the fairest of her sex, peerless alike in charms of person and mind. Fairest Diana, can you not imagine of whom I speak?"

"Mr. Montaigne," said Diana, "do not be ridiculous. I really do not understand what you mean by all that rhodomontade and high-flown language."

"Oh! Miss Diana, fairest of all women, peerless amongst the loveliest damsels of whom England can boast."

"Mr. Valentine Montaigne," Diana interrupted, "I beg of you to cease that farrago of nonsense."

"I grant that it is nonsense thus far, that no words of mine can do justice to the theme."

He was about to launch out into another wild rhapsody after his manner, half serious, half playful, when again she interposed.

"Mr. Montaigne, I do more than beg of you to cease your flatteries and compliments. I insist that you do so, and that instantly. You dare not refuse the command of a lady."

In fact, Diana was at that moment in no mood to receive with pleasure her admirer's extravagant eulogiums.

Her mind was still occupied, in a confused sort of way, with the astonishing news she had just heard about Andrew Lorimer.

But though her thoughts were thus in a measure taken up by the sudden change in the fortunes of the young surgeon, for a time her volatile nature was not proof against the winning manners and speech of Valentine Montaigne, and gradually she felt herself drawn into conversation, exercising her wit and power of repartee in her usual manner.

Valentine had boundless audacity when occasion suited, but always knew how to temper it with prudence.

He no longer poured fulsome compliments into her ear, using far more effective weapons.

Broad flattery she despised, and he knew it. Indeed, he had only made use of it to show his skill and gallantry in this as in every other form of love making.

It is certain that Valentine Montaigne had, towards the fair sex, a most fascinating manner and address.

He was at once tender, whilst assuming an air of affectionate devotion, without extravagance or self-humiliation. Deeply respectful in tone and manner, he yet allowed the lady to see that he was by no means unworthy of regard, using to the best advantage all graces of person and deportment.

So far as pleasant talk, an ever-smiling and eminently handsome face, with most winning ways went, no man could be better armed for a siege of Diana's heart.

She, gay, thoughtless, and impressionable, felt the magic of his words, looks, and manners, and, when he strove, as at this time, to influence her in his favour, he never failed in gaining his object.

Her beautiful face tinged with a slight flush, her sparkling eyes, bright smiles, and tuneful, silvery laugh, all betokened that she was well pleased with herself and her companion.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LORIMER MAKES KNOWN TO DIANA HIS RESOLVE
CONCERNING HIS FORTUNE.

So far and so fast did Valentine Montaigne the gay, daring cavalier, insinuate himself into the good graces of Diana Featherstonehaugh, that he succeeded in taking her hand and tenderly though respectfully, pressing it to his lips without receiving more than a playful remonstrance.

And that ere they had been a quarter of an hour alone together.

Assuredly, Valentine Montaigne made good use of his time and opportunity ; and certain it is too that Diana felt more favourably, more tenderly inclined to her gay and handsome admirer, than had ever been the case before.

The return of Andrew Lorimer put an end to what might, without much stretch of fancy, be termed a love scene.

He entered, and, in his own grave, quiet manner, apologised for having been compelled to leave his visitors.

"I am sure, however," he added, with a smile, "that I could not have left you in better hands. If ever a man had the magic power of charming away melancholy and bringing bright smiles to the face especially of a lady, it is our friend, Valentine Montaigne."

A marked change came over the fair face

of Diana, not suddenly, but none the less surely and obviously.

The pleased exhilarated expression faded away, and both eyes and thoughts were turned to Andrew Lorimer.

Surely, but inevitably, her whole attention mental and physical became riveted on the young surgeon, and the memory of Valentine's brilliant pleasant talk and respectful tenderness faded away.

She was in the presence of another influence now : not so marked, but subtler, and certainly not less powerful.

And this was the more the case, because Andrew Lorimer seemed, and indeed was, utterly unconscious that she regarded him with any particular interest at that moment.

The changes in his fortunes had made a vast difference in her feelings towards him.

To Andrew Lorimer, as regarded her, it had made no difference whatever.

Indeed, as yet he had not had time to think over the situation—certainly, not to speculate on what effect it might have on the estimation in which he was held by any of those who knew of his sudden accession to wealth.

He did his duty as host with that quiet ease and grace peculiar to him, and Diana Featherstonehaugh found herself assenting, almost without volition on her part, to stay and join him and Valentine Montaigne in a cup of tea.

Lorimer rang, and on the appearance of his old housekeeper, Margaret, delivered Diana over to her care, in order that she might remove her hat, and make any alteration in her toilet she chose.

Valentine Montaigne and Andrew Lorimer were now alone together.

"Valentine, my friend," said Andrew Lorimer, "I am going to ask a favour of you?"

"It is granted, if in my power, whatever it may be."

"I am going to ask you, and also Miss Featherstonehaugh, to bind yourselves to secrecy!"

The other seemed scarcely to understand him, so Lorimer proceeded to explain, in as few words as possible, his wishes and intentions.

Valentine listened in the utmost astonishment to the words of the young surgeon, and, though spoken with perfect seriousness and gravity, could scarcely believe he meant to act as he said.

"What," he cried, "do you really mean that you will not take advantage of your great fortune?"

Lorimer thought for a moment, then replied: "I suppose in a worldly light, and in the opinion of many, I ought to think myself fortunate, in thus suddenly inheriting wealth; but I cannot so regard it. To say nothing of the sudden death of my brother and uncle, it would be, and must be, painful to me to find myself placed in a position of antagonism to my father. It is only by the accident of their sudden death that I inherit the property which would have gone to my father. My father believes me dead, and, acting on this belief, has taken possession of the property which, in that case, would go to him with the title. Do you not see, friend Valentine, that in dispossessing him, in turning the old man out all but penniless on the world, I should be playing a hateful part, one against which my

nature revolts? The knowledge of my existence would be information to my father that I, not he, was heir to the property; and so I have decided to keep my existence unknown to all people in Cumberland, save Lawyer Lubbock, and the messenger who brought the news.

"By thus acting, the baronet, my father, will be left undisturbed, in possession of the estate, until he is called to another world. When that day comes, it will be open to me to take possession if I choose. In the meantime, I see no reason why I should not live on here, in the quiet way I have hitherto done, in peace and happiness."

Valentine Montaigne, himself high-spirited and honourable, was quite unable to understand such sublime self-abnegation.

"But Lorimer, my friend, there is no necessity for this absurd sacrifice. You can claim your rights, and yet refrain from turning your father out from the house and estates he believes to be his. You can even, if your generosity goes so far, make over to him half the estates on condition that he makes you his heir; so that, after his death, they would again revert to you. There can be no necessity for the extravagant sacrifice you propose."

"Ah, Valentine, you know not what you say, at least you do not understand. My father is a man who would rather die than accept a favour from me, the son whom he disowned and drove from his door. He is a proud man, as proud as Colonel Featherstonehaugh himself."

"Nay then," said Valentine, "if being as proud, he is also as unbending and implacable as the Black Colonel, it would be useless to deal

with him in gentle form. In such case, were I concerned, though he had greater claims on me than the chance one of being my father, I would have my rights, and he should learn that I was master."

"So would not I, Valentine. I must and will act according to the dictates of my conscience, come weal, come woe."

Diana at this moment, having removed her hat, entered, and Lorimer rose to receive her.

It happened that the door was ajar as she came down, and she stopped on the threshold to loop up her riding habit. And thus it came about that she heard the latter part of this conversation, in which her father was mentioned as the Black Colonel, by Valentine Montaigne. The consequence was, that gentleman received from her an angry look for which he was quite unable to account.

To Andrew Lorimer she was condescending and affable in the extreme, and when he spoke of his wish to bind her to secrecy as he had done Valentine Montaigne, she at once promised.

Then he went on, and in as few words as possible explained his position, the course he had resolved on pursuing, and his reasons for so doing. He wound up by apologising for being compelled, in order to carry out his plans, to ask her to keep the matter secret. "Indeed, Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said in conclusion, "I do assure you that it is by no fault of mine that I am necessitated to ask this favour of you. Dear friend Valentine here, in his joy at what appeared to him a brilliant change of fortune for me, spoke rashly. But you know," he added, with a smile, "he is ever rash."

Diana listened gravely, with attention and deep interest, to all the young surgeon said. She remained silent for some time after he had concluded.

All the while he had been speaking, his words fell on her mind and heart like a gentle rain on hard parched ground.

She heard and understood the grave reverend manner in which he spoke of his uncle and brother suddenly called to their account.

Both had been his enemies, and yet there lurked in his heart no bitter thought or memory of past injuries.

She listened with a feeling of wondering admiration to the respectful manner in which he spoke of the old man, his father, and what a heavy blow it would be to his pride if he should learn that his disowned son was alive, and entitled to the whole property. And when, finally, still speaking in the same quiet manner as though on the most ordinary matter in the world, he announced the self-sacrifice he had firmly resolved upon, she was unable to put her thoughts into shape.

She regarded him with a sort of wondering admiration, mingled with a feeling of humility and unworthiness on her part, as a child might to a bright and shining angel.

To Diana, brought up in wealth, the proud daughter of a prouder father, this voluntary surrender of the young surgeon by all the advantages of wealth and a lofty position, seemed a sacrifice superhuman in its generosity. She had read and heard of instances of such heroic virtue, but now such a sacrifice was brought home to her as a fact of present life. The more she thought of

it, the more unbounded became her admiration and profound respect for Andrew Lorimer.

She felt unable to think clearly, to reason about the matter, but her whole mind and soul seemed pervaded with a feeling almost approaching worship and humble adoration of the young surgeon's generosity and greatness of mind.

She had been before this attracted by him, had felt the strange influence which he unconsciously wielded over her, had rebelled thereat, and been furiously angry at her own inability to move him either to anger, or the reverse feeling, indeed to produce any effect on him whatever.

But it was now for the first time, that she truly appreciated his moral character in all its grandeur.

She was awakened from the strange wondering state of admiration into which the sudden development of his greatness of mind had cast her by his voice.

"Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said, "you appear quite surprised. I hope you do not disapprove of my decision. Still more, I hope that you will not refuse the favour I ask."

All Diana's high spirits and vivacity seemed to have flown, and she was singularly quiet and subdued both in speech and manner.

She sat with downcast eyes, slowly stirring her teaspoon in the cup of tea before her, and replied in a low tone to Lorimer's questions, without lifting her eyes.

"Indeed, Doctor Lorimer," she said, "I never had a thought of refusing so reasonable a request as to keep secret the knowledge I acquired of your private affairs—you not intending that I should be informed thereof. And as to dis-

approving of, or thinking foolish, the course you have resolved on, far from it. I feel astonished, almost bewildered, at the greatness of the sacrifice you propose to make."

She paused for a moment, and then, after rather an unfortunate habit of hers, yielded to a sudden impulse of her really generous though wild and wayward nature.

"Doctor Lorimer," she cried, lifting her beautiful blue eyes beaming with enthusiasm, and gazing him full in the face, "I never understood till now the true meaning of the words generosity and magnanimity. Yours is a noble heart. In your presence I feel ashamed of my own inferiority and unworthiness."

The bright flush on her cheek and her sparkling eyes told that the words came from the heart.

Lorimer coloured up, looking as if hearing praises from such lips pleased and at the same time confused him.

Valentine Montaigne was surprised by this sudden burst of vehemence on her part, and did not fail to show it.

He did not frown or scold, as should a hero of melodrama; but he looked sharply, suspiciously from one to the other, and it was easy to read jealous displeasure in the expression of his features.

Diana, too, after she had spoken the impetuous words, was by no means at her ease, and there ensued an awkward and constrained silence, every one of the party carefully avoiding the subject of the sudden change in Andrew Lorimer's worldly prospects.

"You will, doubtless, excuse me, Miss Featherstonehaugh," said Lorimer, "for a short time. I

must give some direction as to this messenger from Cumberland being properly cared for. Then I shall be at your service, and will at once proceed to the Haugh to do what I can for the Colonel. Meanwhile, I leave you in the hands of Mr. Montaigne. I am sure I could not do better," he added with a smile.

Now, Lorimer meant nothing but an ordinary civility by these last words; but Diana fancied there lurked a hidden meaning, so she rose at once.

"No, I thank you—no," she said. "If you will send your housekeeper, I will go upstairs and put on my hat and make ready for a start."

Valentine was greatly annoyed.

His was one of those ungovernable natures which will press their point, be it urging a love suit or besieging a town, indefatigably, in season and out of season, at times and on occasions when prudence would cause ordinary men to be still.

And yet, whether by the force of will, of manner, or of good luck—his most unfortunate essays were never ridiculous—he never met with a direct rebuff.

In the present instance, had Diana remained alone with him, he would instantly and with vehemence have commenced pressing his suit, and would almost certainly have remarked on what was uppermost in his mind—her extreme cordiality, and even affectionate manner, towards Andrew Lorimer.

And at that moment, Diana was in the worst possible humour to listen to his love rhapsodies.

This he must have known, or, at all events, should have known.

"No matter," said Valentine to himself, "she

will be down again in a few moments. She is quick and active as a fawn, Lorimer slow and deliberate about everything like a grave old ox."

However, for once, he was mistaken. Lorimer was slow and deliberate in arranging with the courier, giving him most careful and precise instructions as to how he was to behave and what he was to say when he got back to Cumberland. Also he showed the man a portion of a letter addressed to Mr. Lubbock, the lawyer, in which the latter was instructed to pay the courier a handsome sum of money every month so long as he (Andrew Lorimer) was still unknown, so that it would be in every way to the man's advantage to keep a still tongue.

When Lorimer had done all that was necessary, he returned to the sitting-room.

Diana, somewhat to his surprise, had not yet come down, although he felt certain he had been absent considerably more than half an hour.

Valentine was walking up and down the room, looking more angry and vicious than Lorimer had ever seen him.

Notwithstanding all this, however, and what had already passed, the simple-minded young surgeon had no suspicion that the demon jealousy had a place in his friend's heart.

Lorimer had not been half a minute in the room before Diana came down, ready for the saddle.

Lorimer had already ordered his horse round, and in a very short time they were mounted and ready to start.

To the surprise of both Diana and the doctor, Valentine announced his intention of accompanying them at least part of the way.

"My road is the same as yours for some miles,"

he said; "I will do myself the honour of riding with you."

No objection was spoken; but even Diana, who was always ready to make allowance for the young, sprightly, and handsome Valentine, felt that it was in rather bad taste.

They rode on all three together nearly in silence for a long distance.

Lorimer always rode fast, as he was of opinion that time was of more value than horse-flesh; and, moreover, that a horse well-fed and groomed could stand a few hours brisk gallop better than it would a canter or trot.

On this occasion he seemed more than ever anxious to arrive quickly at his destination.

Truth to say, he liked not the circumstances. It seemed to him to be scarcely right, that he a surgeon, with all a medical man's responsibilities cast upon him, should be riding in company with Colonel Featherstonehaugh's daughter and Valentine Montaigne, the latter his friend but the Colonel's deadly antipathy.

As for Diana, she was a fine horse-woman, and enjoyed thoroughly the rapid pace at which Lorimer rode.

"Valentine, my friend," he said, firmly, though by no means unkindly, "we part here, our road is the left. Besides, it would never do for you to be seen riding with Miss Featherstonehaugh and myself."

Valentine submitted with a very ill grace.

He bid adieu to Diana politely enough, but when Lorimer offered his hand either by his contriving or the animals free fancy, the horse gave a shy, and so they parted without the farewell grip. Andrew Lorimer rode rapidly on to the Haugh, which they soon reached.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

JEALOUSY.

VALENTINE MONTAIGNE, left alone at the cross roads (the same spot where the rencontre between Lorimer and the unfortunate mistress of the Marquis of Monte-Cerro took place), walked his horse slowly a few paces and then wheeled him round, brought him to a standstill and gazed after Diana and her companion, whom he could plainly see in the bright moonlight as they rode on together.

“Master Andrew Lorimer,” he soliloquised, “this is something new, or is it the sudden change in your condition from poverty to wealth which makes me take note of it? It seems certain that the fair Diana is not ill-affected towards you: and, now, for the first time, comes the thought that you, Andrew Lorimer, surgeon of Festonhaugh, have raised your eyes to the black Colonel’s daughter. And yet why should I say raised his eyes? Perchance, the proud Featherstonehaugh might not object to the heir to a baronetcy and present possessor of fifty thousand a year. Certainly, she would prefer him to me, for I am not rich, being a younger son, and, moreover, still greater crime, I am a Montaigne.”

The young man spoke aloud with great bitterness, and gazed after them till they were hidden in the moonlight mist.

"No matter," he continued, as he turned his horse's head homeward. "Though all Satan's fiends stood between me and her, yet would I win her for myself, Diana Featherstonehaugh, I will. I love the girl, and mine she must be. As for you, Andrew Lorimer, I was in the field before you. It will be an evil day when you dare to stand between me and my love. It cannot be—it shall not be. Blood shall flow first."

He spoke as he felt, passionately, vehemently, as men will when they are suddenly awakened to great danger—to the true state of the case.

And on that night he had been awakened to two things—one, the vehemence of his love (or passion, is perhaps the better word) for Diana, the other, that in Andrew Lorimer he had a dangerous rival (especially since the change in his fortunes), supposing that Lorimer was disposed in that direction.

As to this latter supposition, he now persuaded himself that by many indications Lorimer had shown in times past that he admired her: and now the aspect of things was changed. Valentine persuaded himself the young surgeon would become an ardent suitor.

Rash and headstrong in his anger as in his love, Valentine resented this as a deadly affront, and for the time was furious against Andrew Lorimer—he almost hated him.

"It was to keep her himself," muttered Montaigne, in the bitterness of his heart, "that he so lectured me—urged on me the folly and danger, the misery which must ensue through any love affair between myself and Diana. For himself—for himself. He wished to secure her for himself. But he shall not—he shall not. I will slay him first."

This was all muttered savagely under the breath, and fully meant by Valentine Montaigne.

It was not so many days ago that this same Valentine, holding Lorimer by the hand, had said the following words, gratitude beaming in his face and eyes—"Andrew Lorimer, I scarce hope ever to be able to repay the deep service you have rendered me. Believe me, I will never forget your disinterested kindness—your generous humanity. Happen what may, so long as life remains in me, you have a sincere and grateful friend in Valentine Montaigne: more than that, henceforth your friends shall be my friends, your enemies my enemies. The man, be he prince or peasant, who dares assail Andrew Lorimer, shall answer for it to Valentine Montaigne with his life's blood."

And now Valentine, in his jealous and wrongful rage, thought himself of taking the life of his dear friend.

Alas! poor humanity.

Scarcely a word passed between Andrew and Diana after leaving Valentine Montaigne, until they arrived at their destination.

The clatter of their horses hoofs had already given warning, and when they drew rein at the hall door-step there was a groom waiting to receive them.

Diana at once conducted Lorimer to where her father was. Before entering she paused, and laying her hand gently on the young surgeon's arm, said—"Oh! Doctor Lorimer, I do so want to ask you a favour—and yet, I am half afraid."

"You have no necessity, I am sure. I can almost promise to grant the favour before you name it."

"I have promised to keep the secret of your altered prospects?"

Lorimer looked grave, and simply lowered his head in reply.

"You know what a terrible penance it is to a woman to be compelled to keep a secret *all to herself*."

Andrew remained silent, waiting till she should finish.

"I was thinking if you could only allow *one* confidant. I am sure, I would answer for her faithfulness with my life."

A light broke in upon Lorimer. He guessed now that she alluded to Isabel Vanstone. "You mean Miss Vanstone," he asked, his face brightening up.

"Yes, my dear friend Isabel. I would answer for Miss Vanstone with my life."

"I willingly agree to your proposal, quite sure that if you mention to Miss Vanstone that I do not wish what has occurred concerning me to be known, she will keep the secret inviolate."

"Oh! thanks, Doctor Lorimer! You are indeed kind. I will go to Isabel at once. I hope you will be successful in relieving my father's pain."

"I hope so, too, Miss Featherstonehaugh," he said, and bowing, entered the great hall, where lay the Colonel on a couch.

Diana somehow did not feel altogether satisfied. Lorimer had at once granted her request, but she did not feel pleased at the manner in which he did so—the free joyful manner when he found it was of Isabel Vanstone she spoke.

"He was annoyed because I accidentally heard it," she said; "but he seemed quite delighted that Isabel Vanstone should know."

She clinched her small hands, set her teeth fast, and a bright colour flushed up to her face.

Was she not angry with, and jealous of, her dearest friend at that moment?

It was about the same time, only a few minutes earlier, that Valentine Montaigne had ridden away homewards, his heart filled with fury against Andrew Lorimer his sworn friend.

Alas! poor humanity!

For good or evil, weal or woe, love makes or mars most lives.

It was a matter of utter impossibility for Diana, or indeed any other person, long to nourish evil passions in her breast in the presence of the gentle Isabel.

Her jealous anger—for indeed it was nothing less—melted like snow before the sun, and Diana hastened to confide to her the extraordinary news concerning Andrew Lorimer.

The astonishment of Isabel Vanstone was almost equal to her delight at hearing of Lorimer's sudden rise in the world.

"But would you believe it, Isabel," Diana said, "he actually declares he will not avail himself of his good fortune but will still allow the people in Cumberland—his father especially—to believe him dead. He says that he will continue to lead his present humdrum life—talks of doing his duty and all such nonsense as that."

"Oh, Diana! how can you speak so? If Doctor Lorimer has indeed decided to act as you say, he has given another proof of his disinterested generosity and goodness of heart."

"Fiddlestick!" cried Diana. "I was almost of your opinion when first he said what he meant to do—indeed, I am afraid, made myself look ab-

surd before Valentine Montaigne, by extravagant laudation of Doctor Lorimer."

"Valentine Montaigne, too—was he present?"

"Yes, he was there at the time the courier or messenger arrived with the intelligence. It was by accident that I heard it. I was just on the threshold, an involuntary eavesdropper, when I heard the messenger wish him joy, as the richest man in Cumberland. Having heard so much, Doctor Lorimer told me all."

"Then, do tell me," cried Isabel, "for, as yet, I seem only to realize it in a vague misty fashion—like one in a dream."

"Well, Isabel, I will tell you in just as few words as I can, and then you shall judge as to whether or not Andrew Lorimer is not absolutely Quixotic in his folly."

Isabel knew but too well her friend's perverse disposition to argue the point with her, so listened quietly and patiently, whilst Diana proceeded to enlighten her to the best of her power and knowledge, speaking rapidly, and in an excited manner.

Isabel could not fail to perceive that Diana was really greatly interested in this sudden change of the young surgeon's fortunes, but as yet, could not tell in what manner it would act on Diana's mind.

Wayward and wilful, it would have been as difficult to prognosticate the direction of the wind at a future time.

"From his earliest years," Diana went on, "Andrew Lorimer was not on good terms with either his elder brother or his uncle, the baronet, and even his father seemed to have conceived a dislike for him,

"The reason for this was the fact of the younger son being of a quiet and peaceable disposition, and unwilling to adopt the profession of arms.

"Far from this, he, Andrew Lorimer, selected the career of a surgeon, as the one best suited to his tastes and wishes.

"This was enough to cause the cup of wrath to boil over, and Andrew Lorimer was ignominiously driven from his father's door to follow out the beggarly profession he had chosen, as best he could.

"He had a sum of money under his mother's settlement, and this he was enabled to obtain through the lawyer in Carlisle.

"With this he sought his fortune, and finally settled down in this neighbourhood, his existence being unknown save to the lawyer of Carlisle, all others supposing him dead.

"But now comes the news of the drowning of his uncle and brother, by which catastrophe his father inherits the title, and he, Andrew Lorimer, the whole of the great estates. There, Isabel, that is all. I know no more, except that he bound me and Valentine Montaigne over to secrecy, and declared that he would still live as he had done in these parts, as a plain country surgeon, leaving his father to enjoy title and broad estates, in utter ignorance of his being alive.

"As I think over the matter, the more strongly does it impress me as the maddest thing a presumably sensible man ever dreamed of."

Diana ceased, and Isabel, too, remained silent, buried in deep thought.

Isabel raising her eyes to her friend's face, and regarding her steadily, said, "Surely, Diana, whatever may be your opinion of the worldly

wisdom of the course Doctor Lorimer has decided on adopting, you cannot dispute, you must willingly acknowledge, that it is an example of noble sacrifice, never exceeded, rarely equalled, in ancient or modern times."

Diana laughed that strange little laugh peculiar to her—a musical laugh, and with a mocking ring about its very melody, which fell unpleasant on sensitive ears.

It did so on those of Isabel.

"Ah, Diana! I wish you would not laugh so, you surely only pretend to despise what is good and noble in human nature."

"Silly girl!" replied Diana. "I am not laughing at Andrew Lorimer or his noble self-sacrifice, as you call it, but at you, you soft-hearted little goose!"

"Diana, I will not argue with you. I am not your equal in repartee. Though you laugh at me for admiring Andrew Lorimer's unselfish conduct, you know in your heart, which is not of adamant (as you would fain make me believe), that I am right. And for one reason, I am very glad at Doctor Lorimer's accession to a fortune which he need only speak to claim—glad for his sake, glad for yours!"

"And why so—at least so far as I am concerned?"

"Because, Diana, you will be saved the self-reproach—ay, remorse even—which must have come in future years if you had persisted in the project you have so often declared to me—that of winning the love of a good and honourable man for the cruel pleasure of a shameful triumph."

These last were strong words, coming from the mouth of the gentle Isabel; however, she spoke

warmly, a gleam of anger or of indignation in her usually soft eyes.

Diana noted this, and, moreover, had not quite forgotten her own displeasure against Isabel, so took up arms against her at once.

"And what has the fact of Andrew Lorimer having come into a large property to do with me? How can it affect me in any way? Do you mean to insinuate that I shall strive in earnest to win his favour now that he is a rich man, heir to a baronetcy, while, when I regarded him merely as a poor country surgeon, I only thought to amuse myself with the man, and, in due time, punish him properly for his audacity? Such is the only possible interpretation I can put upon your words. Ha! ha! ha! You little know Diana Featherstonehaugh!"

"Oh, Diana!"

"Why, girl," cried the latter impetuously, as she worked herself up to an excited state, "the very fact of his being no longer poor and obscure, save by his own choice, his own proud humility, would be the reason why I would strive all the more to break the proud spirit which delights to wear such a cloak. All the more will I strive to win his heart, for he will be less stern with me; his pride will unbend a little with the consciousness that he is my equal in rank and fortune, and that it would not be a dishonourable act even should he aspire to the hand of the daughter of proud Colonel Featherstonehaugh, of the Haugh. For that reason my conquest will be all the more certain and easy—my triumph the greater!"

"And for some of the reasons," broke in Isabel, suddenly, "you have mentioned, your generosity

should be greater. You call him honourable, and say that through this very sense of honour you will the sooner bring him under the influence of your fascinations. Should you persist in your intention and win the heart of Andrew Lorimer at last, say that it shall not be to bruise it—that you will not refuse his love.”

Diana laughed scornfully. “Not bruise his heart! Ha! ha! ha! I will trample on, and crush it under my feet! Not refuse his love! Ha! ha! I will scorn—fling it from me as I would an old glove, after it had served my turn! That is what I will do, Isabel!”

Diana actually panted with excitement, and looked (if ever a beautiful girl could) a fury.

Isabel did not make sufficient allowance for this angry excitement, nor did she pause to think that there must be some strong reason for such sudden passion.

Had she paused to consider, it would probably have struck her that, in the inmost heart of Diana, there lurked a tender feeling for the young surgeon.

Isabel was very pale when she spoke again, and her words did not come sharply and energetically, like those of Diana, but slowly, quietly.

“Diana Featherstonehaugh, I have listened and heard you to my sorrow. We have been friends, dear friends, and to lose your love would be as heavy an affliction as to lose a sister by death. If you persist in acting as you say, we can no longer be friends, because you will have played a base, cruel, and unworthy part. But heaven forbid that ever such will occur! You only jest, or at the worst speak in momentary anger. You will think better of it, will you not,

Diana dear? We shall still be friends, and you will spare poor Andrew Lorimer?"

"You seem very certain of my power to do as I said," remarked Diana, sharply.

"Alas! Diana, I know too well what a strange fascination you can exercise. Your very waywardness seems to act as another charm. Promise me, you will do as I ask of you?"

Diana hesitated for some little time.

"I cannot promise," she said; "you have no right to ask me, Isabel."

"That means that the fell intention is deeply rooted in your heart. Diana, I speak in sorrow, and not in anger. Once again, let me warn you, since entreaties avail not, for your own sake not to injure or humiliate Andrew Lorimer. Perchance you might wreck his life, break his proud, noble heart; but think you that you will escape scatheless—that you will not suffer too?"

"So, if I understand you, Isabel, you threaten me with Andrew Lorimer's vengeance? That is better still."

"No, not his vengeance—he is not the man to wreak vengeance on a woman, however bitterly she may have wronged him; but it is yourself who will be his avenger, Diana—who will call down a righteous retribution on your head. Again I pray you, alter your purpose, and I bid you beware. The skilful mechanic may, by means of cunning devices, undermine the foundation and finally overthrow the huge rock; but the rock may yet in its fall crush him utterly, so that he shall perish in the ruins."

CHAPTER XL.

THE ORDEAL.

DIANA was annoyed, though undoubtedly a good deal impressed, by Isabel's vehement remonstrances and warning.

And because she was annoyed, she refused to listen to the promptings of her better nature, and yield to the earnest entreaties of her friend.

At this time there came a servant with a message from Doctor Lorimer to say that he would like to see Miss Featherstonehaugh and Miss Vanstone.

It was purely on professional matters he had to speak to them. Addressing Diana especially, he gave her instructions as to the treatment of her father, whose pains would, he felt sure, he said, shortly abate, and, with care and prudence, disappear altogether for the present.

When he had finished giving these necessary directions, Isabel seized the opportunity of congratulating him on his change of fortune. She went further even, telling him she was aware of the manner in which he proposed acting through Diana, and that she heartily sympathized with him, gloried in and admired his magnanimity and greatness of heart.

To Diana he had spoken kindly, yet calmly, almost coldly; but he seemed to brighten up under the influence of Isabel's enthusias-

tic words, and met her cordiality with equal warmth.

It was not only that his manner and speech was more kindly than to Diana, but there was an absence of all restraint, from which he was never free when conversing with the heiress of Featherstonehaugh.

The consciousness of this, which it was impossible for a girl with such acute perception as she possessed not to observe, was very irritating to Diana, though she felt she could undoubtedly exert over Lorimer a certain fascination of a totally different nature.

It was in her case as though he were compelled—drawn to her against his will by an irresistible attraction; whereas with Isabel he seemed to be always on the most friendly and cordial terms.

It was thus they parted.

He bade adieu to Isabel frankly, and cordially expressed a hope soon to see her again, a wish which she on her part fully reciprocated.

Diana exerted all her fascinations, and in spite of himself, he was much longer bidding her farewell than he intended to be.

Insensibly, but surely, she threw over him, around him, the magic net of her fascinations. Her smile never seemed so bright, her beauty so glorious, as now.

Her blue eyes never beamed with such sparkling, witching lustre as when fixed on his face with an expression indescribable, but of terrible power over the heart of Andrew Lorimer.

The touch of her soft, warm hand, as he finally bade her adieu, sent a thrill through his whole frame.

And as he rode slowly down the avenue from the Haugh, he thought, half aloud :

"Beautiful siren ! Who can see, know, converse with her without feeling the effect of her charms ! In her presence, with her eyes upon me, her musical voice singing in my ears, I can think of nought else in the world. Is it my fate ? I must avoid her. I will avoid her. And yet she drew from me a promise that I would visit the Haugh again within a week. Ah !" — here he heaved a sigh — " we are not our own masters. Right well did Will Shakespeare say :

" ' There is a Providence doth shape our ends,
Rough hew them as we may. ' "

Diana and Isabel stood together at the window of the drawing-room, which looked down over the drive up to the Haugh—that grand old avenue of elms, the finest in all broad Hampshire, one of the chief glories of the ancient hall.

There was a bright moon.

Said Diana to her friend, a strange smile on her beautiful face : " He will look back when he reaches the curve by the old oak."

They could see him quite plainly as he rode along at a slow walk—quite an unusual thing with him.

The very slowness of the pace at which he rode away seemed to betoken a certain unwillingness.

" He will look back," repeated Diana.

" No," said Isabel ; " I do not think he will look back."

" I will wager you that he does look back before he passes out of sight," said Diana.

" No, I should not like to wager."

Diana was in one of her strange wayward

humours—half good-tempered, half-spiteful, wearing on her face that incomprehensible smile at once beautiful and chilling.

“Well, then, if you will not wager, we will accept the fact of his looking back as an omen of the future. Should he ride on and pass out of sight without once looking back, we will accept it as foreshadowing that he will prove invulnerable to love’s shaft, that in vain I shall employ against his coat of mail all the choicest and most deadly weapons of women’s armoury. Should he look back, I shall hold it as an omen of victory ; that he—this proudly cold Andrew Lorimer—will be unable to resist me, and that I shall bring him to my feet, a humble suppliant for favour. Say, Isabel, do you agree to the ordeal ?”

“It matters not,” was the reply ; “Andrew Lorimer will not look back.”

Scarcely had she spoken the words when Andrew Lorimer, just before he reached the bend in the avenue Diana had spoken of, reined in his horse, wheeled him round, and then remained motionless for some time, gazing steadfastly, and, as it would really seem, sadly towards the Haugh.

Isabel sighed deeply, but said not a word.

Diana’s silvery laugh rang out—a laugh with triumph in its musical tones.

“He looked back ! he looked back !” she said ; “and surely as he looked back, he will come back ; and so surely as he comes back again, and again, and many times, he becomes my willing slave.”

Isabel now spoke :

“On this subject, these words I now speak shall be the last I will ever speak ; so, I pray you, heed them well. So surely as Andrew

Lorimer comes back again, and again, and many times, according to your prophecy, and you persist in your present purpose, so surely, Diana Featherstonehaugh, shall black sorrow follow—sorrow and misery for you and for him. I listened to your prophecy; now you have heard mine ! ”

Diana did not laugh; and as they looked forth from the window, they saw Andrew Lorimer full in the moonlight again turn his horse, and at the same slow pace ride away until he was hidden by the bend in the drive.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE END OF THE VENDETTA.

ANDREW LORIMER rode slowly homewards. Was he in love with Diana Featherstonehaugh? He asked himself the question as the reins hung loosely on his horse's neck, and failed to get a satisfactory answer.

Certainly, in her presence he felt the sway of her fascinations, he admired her; but away from her did not all the homage of his soul go forth, unbidden, to Isabel Vanstone?

It was late when the young surgeon reached home that night, and greatly to his surprise, he found Valentine Montaigne had returned.

"Lorimer, my boy," were the words which greeted him on entering his parlour, "I am ashamed to say I had hard unkind thoughts about you to-night. In the heat of my passionate jealousy, I swore that not even your life should stand in the way of my winning Diana's love. Forgive me, Andrew; I resign her to you if such be the will of Heaven. Why, indeed, should she waste a thought on me, when so noble a fellow as you are woos her?"

"Montaigne, on my soul, I love not Diana Featherstonehaugh; certainly, not well enough to marry her. I own she fascinates me strangely. The advice I gave you to avoid her had no selfish origin, it was simply prompted by a desire for

your safety, knowing, as I do, the remorseless vengeance which the Colonel would execute did he detect you making love to his daughter."

At this juncture the conversation was suddenly interrupted by the loud, swift clatter of reckless galloping.

Then a foam-coated thoroughbred was pulled up almost on his haunches at the gate.

A fierce tug at the bell—a quick rush to the door—in broken sentences a servant from the Haugh gasped out:

"Quick, Doctor Lorimer, the Colonel, my master, is dying! Ride for your life or you will be too late."

Hurriedly putting up such drugs as the young surgeon deemed necessary, whilst his servant was saddling his swiftest mare, he was in five minutes ready to start on his night journey.

"You will scarcely await my return, Montaigne," he said; "indeed, I may be detained all night at the Haugh if, as I fear, the attack of gout has mounted to the Colonel's stomach."

"No, Andrew, I shall not wait here; my horse is fleet and is already saddled, I will accompany you. I bear the black Colonel no ill-feeling, in fact, the hatred has always been on his side, and it may be that I shall be of some use."

"Very true," replied the doctor, "if, for instance, I should require some drugs other than those I have taken with me, you alone know where to place your hand on them and could fetch them."

Possibly never before had the forest glades echoed such rapid hoof-falls. It was a mad, wild, furious gallop; and when the two drew rein at the hall door, two white, steaming horses were

visible, instead of the bay and the chesnut which had started from the surgery three quarters of an hour previously.

All was confusion at the Haugh. Servants hurried to and fro—Diana was in hysterics—Isabel alone was calm and helpful.

It was as Andrew Lorimer had feared, the gout had flown upwards and the Colonel was writhing in acute agony; he smiled faintly as the doctor approached his bedside.

“Lorimer, I am booked; the gout will get to my stomach and settle me this night, I fear.”

The young surgeon called to Isabel to get him some hot turpentine fomentations as quickly as possible, then he administered a sedative; and in a short time the Colonel was comparatively free from pain, though by no means out of danger.

“Thanks, doctor, I am better now, but I have not many hours to live. I have been a hard, vindictive man all my days, but the near approach of death softens one strangely. I wish Valentine Montaigne were here, in the humour I am now in. With the urgent necessity for the forgiveness of my own sins, I feel that I could forgive even him.”

“Valentine is here, Colonel; he is in the hall below. He rode over with me in case I required anything from my surgery in the course of the night. I will fetch him at once.”

He soon returned accompanied by Montaigne and Diana Featherstonehaugh.

On tiptoe they approached the bed wherein the Colonel lay, with closed eyes and pain-contracted brow, one hand soothingly clasped in that of Isabel Vanstone.

Slowly he raised his eyelids, and a smile

flickered across his face. He extended his hand to Valentine, and said:

"Valentine Montaigne, I forgive you, or rather I banish forever my unreasonable hatred towards you. In reality I have nothing to forgive. You never injured me, and your presence at the Haugh to-night, which good Lorimer here has explained to me, proves the goodness and kindness of your heart."

Still retaining Montaigne's hand he released the other from Isabel's grasp, and seized with it the delicate hand of Diana.

"You, my darling, bear him no animosity?"

A wave of crimson surged over Diana's face, and she trembled as she replied in faltering tones: "No, dear father, I certainly bear Mr. Montaigne no ill-will."

Watching the pair closely, a sudden light shone in the black Colonel's eyes; before either were aware of his intention, he placed Diana's hand in Valentine's.

"Diana, it will please your dying father to see the feud ended thus. Valentine, be good to her. She is worthy of your love—my blessing on you both. Lorimer, some more of that anodyne. The pain is getting unbearable. Isabel, reach me that sealed packet from my escritoire."

The Colonel took the packet from her hands and gave it to Valentine Montaigne. "Read it, my boy," he said, "after I am gone. It will, to some extent, explain the hereditary vendetta that raged between the Featherstonehaughs and the Montaignes for generations, but which now, thank God, is ended."

They were the last words the Colonel ever spoke. Even while he uttered them, a violent

spasm passed over his frame and he fell back dead.

Valentine led the distracted Diana from the chamber of death, whilst Isabel and Lorimer reverently closed the eyes of the last male of the proud race of Featherstonehaugh.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SEALED PACKET.

SOME weeks had elapsed since Colonel Hector Featherstonehaugh of that ilk had been numbered with his ancestors in the family vault. The first wild grief of Diana had spent itself, and she was yielding to the comforting sympathy of her friend Isabel.

Already Valentine Montaigne was a frequent visitor, with Dr. Lorimer, at the Haugh, nor did his presence have any less soothing effect in that there was much of tender affection mingled with his pity.

One night in the early autumn, Valentine said, as the four were gathered round a huge fire in the hall,

“Have you no curiosity, Diana, to know the contents of the sealed packet your father handed me that sad night, and the reason of his sudden reconciliation with me?”

Without waiting for a reply, he produced a manuscript from his pocket, saying:

“With your permission, I will read this sad story to you now, as I think we are all four somehow mixed up in it.

“The endorsement runs thus—

“During my recent severe attack of gout, and consequent confinement to the house, I have carefully looked through a number of public records,

private letters and family papers of the time of that arch-villain and blood-stained scoundrel Cromwell, from which I have compiled the accompanying narrative. Without doubt my prejudices against the Montaignes, as will be seen, is to a great extent unwarranted. That my great-grand-uncle (not my great-grandfather as I always thought) lost his life through Sir Archibald is clear, but that the latter was justified, is, I think, equally clear.

H. F."

The Colonel's Narrative.

The separation of the English people into two hostile camps—the partisans of kingly prerogative on the one side, the champions of representative government on the other—which may be said to have culminated on the 22nd of August, 1642, when Charles the First set up the royal standard at Nottingham, was as marked and stern in thousands of obscure English homes as in the great bodies of the State, or in the ranks of highly-placed chieftains of the opposing parties.

This would necessarily be the case, so deeply was the heart of the nation stirred—with so true an instinct did both sides comprehend and appreciate the greatness of the issues involved in the appeal to the last argument of kings, and of king-defying people.

In few of those homes was the hard and fast line dividing the nation more sharply defined than in the families of John Montaigne, a prosperous franklin—that is, he cultivated his own land—and Sir Richard Vanstone, knight, one of the old squirearchy class, who, if not as a rule wealth-burdened, were rich in the ennobling gift of "gentle" birth.

Both were hereditary dwellers in the county of Hampshire, not very far distant from the borders of the New Forest, fast friends, and helpful neighbours, as their fathers before them had been for as long as family tradition enabled them to trace their ancestry in the dim rearward and abyss of time.

There was, too, the cement of substantial equality to bind the two families in unity; for though Sir Richard had the advantage in point of dignity, and could write himself *Armigero*, John Montaigne was richest in lands and beeves, and his name subscribed to a bond would have commanded far more respect in the money-market of the time than that of the "gentle" knight. Dignity, thus discounted, could, without derogation, shake fraternal hands with the wealthy, if untitled, commonalty.

Nor was there much cause for marked divergence in the clerical and political opinions of the two friends. John Montaigne, though a stout champion of parliamentary privilege, honoured the King in a hereditary sort of way; and if he had at various times sheltered Nonconformist ministers when William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, hunted through the land, he himself regularly attended the parish church on Sabbath mornings, and slept in orthodox quiescence throughout the sermon—prelatically tainted as it might be.

And Sir Richard, though he held stoutly by the divine right of kings, was dubious as to Charles's authority to levy ship-money of his own mere will upon inland counties. Neither his father or grandfather, he could answer for so far back, had ever paid such an impost, and he himself only did so under loyal protest.

So far, then, as regarded their immediate selves, John Montaigne and Sir Richard Vanstone might have jogged along comfortably enough through the hurly-burly time, and whilst agreeing to differ as to which party was chiefly to blame as the stirrer up of national strife, patiently held on the safe and quiet tenor of their way, till the judgment of the Lord of Hosts should be made unequivocally manifest by the final victory of Prince *or* Parliament.

This sensible resolve of two peacefully-inclined widowers was unhappily set at nought by the younger Montaignes and Vanstones—another illustration of the sad truth that a man's worst foes are those of his own household.

Richard Vanstone, the younger, was a high-flying Royalist, and had already been honoured with a captaincy in Prince Rupert's regiment of horse. He had undergone his baptism of fire at the battle of Edge Hill, in which indecisive conflict he had been wounded, and was now at home for a while on sick-leave. He did not in that neighbourhood sport his uniform, nor boast of his commission in the Royal Army. He was simply Master Richard Vanstone, who had been severely hurt by a fall from his horse.

The worthy knight's handsome daughter, Mabel, was moreover an enthusiast for the King, and one can easily imagine to what loyal lengths the pretty politician in petticoats, brimming over with Flora M'Ivor Royalism, would go.

Quite naturally; for are not regal crowns and lordly coronets inseparably associated in "queen of love and beauty"—"baron's daughter"—all well-born charming maidens' minds, with chivalry?—that unbought grace of life, cheap defence of

nations, nurse of manly sentiment, *etc., etc.*, (*vide* Burke), whose distinguishing motto ever has been, ever will be, *Place aux dames* !

Even Archibald Montaigne, heavily as the merciless truth hung at the fevered beatings of his heart, could not but admit the lovable naturalness of a predilection engendered and sustained, as it might be, by what he deemed a fantastic sense of loyal duty.

What a cold, dark, seemingly impassable gulf had gradually yawned between him and both sister and brother, as the strong, fiery-tongued years, sweeping past, impressed them—very differently impressed them!—with a burning sense of the anxieties, perils, duties, of the exigent, distracted time !

Archibald Montaigne's duty to humanity, as he understood it, was not to be charmed away by even the smiles of Mabel Vanstone ; no, nor to be chilled, rebuked, by her frowns. Though no fanatic, no millenium-dreamer, he had deliberately cast in his lot with the Parliament, and, having put his hand to the plough, would certainly not look back.

He, too, was a Captain—"Captain-Lieutenant"—commissioned by Colonel Cromwell, then busy organising at St. Ives the first levy of that astonishing Volunteer Cavalry, afterwards world-famous as "The Ironsides"—the most *conclusive* soldiers the world has perhaps ever seen ; who never hesitated at any odds, however great, and with whom the day of battle was invariably that of victory. Archibald Montaigne highly valued this appointment, well-knowing, as did all discerning men that had ever come into contact with Farmer Cromwell, how keen a judge of character was that

remarkable man, in whom, though he was forty years old when he began soldiering, the qualities of a great commander unmistakably developed themselves in his very first encounters with the Royalist troops—far better disciplined, in respect of mechanical organisation, though they were, than the raw cavalry whom he confidently hurled against them—cavalry that *could* have had, in martinet estimation, but one military merit—that of riding well.

The time for action, for the disruption of the two families had arrived.

The Farmer Colonel had got his thousand troopers ready—in his sense of military readiness, which merely meant that they sat in their saddles as if they grew there, handled their long heavy swords freely as willow wands, kept their powder thoroughly dry, put their trust in God, and the triumph of the good cause, perfect, unchangeable.

Had their commander, indeed, ordered them to “Wheel by threes,” or illustrate any other professional equine conundrum, they would probably have made a distressing *fiasco* of it—have so exposed themselves “that in actual warfare the entire brigade might have been utterly annihilated in a few minutes.”

Not having been subjected to that crucial test, one reason probably being that Colonel Cromwell was as ignorant or careless of such essentialities of war as themselves, the unabashed Ironside Volunteers were straining eagerly as blood-hounds on the start, to fight the battle of the Lord, and inscribe their true military character with their good swords upon the backs of “malignant” Cavaliers, wonderfully organised and led as these were, or were to be, by the German Princes

Rupert and Maurice—scientific soldiers they, thoroughly versed in the tactics of *la grande guerre* as developed with such surprising success during the struggle in the Palatinate.

Captain Richard Vanstone was quite as eager as any Parliamentarian could be for a decisive encounter of the opposing forces. His wound was healed, and he should rejoin Prince Rupert in full assurance of success.

The sacred cause of Royalty, of lawful rule, righteous supremacy, was visibly in the ascendant. Not the nobility alone, but the natural leaders of the people, the county gentry, and with them, of course, the rural counties' militias, had rallied to the King. The Irish army—that army by the aid of which the unfortunate Earl of Strafford, who raised and disciplined it, had assured the King “he might subjugate this kingdom”—as urged against him by the factious Commons in support of their impeachment—were embarking for England in large detachments, one of which, under the command of Lord Byron and Colonel Monk, numbering over three thousand men, had already arrived.

Moreover, every Parliamentary General of repute and experience—the Earls of Essex and Manchester (Lord Kimbottom), Sir William Walter—had already been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The rebel Roundheads would be thoroughly and speedily put down; the beginning of the end was come, and the distraught people, paternally coerced into loyal submission, would again dwell in peace beneath the shadow of an absolute sceptre, swayed by an anointed King, as in the good old days of “merrie” England.

This, at all events, was the general tenor of the conversation at "The Pollards," Sir Richard Vanstone's residence, on the eve of the departure of Captain Richard Vanstone and Captain-Lieutenant Montaigne—the one to join the Royalist, the other, the Rebel forces.

Besides the newly-fledged captains, there were present Sir Richard Vanstone, his daughter, Montaigne senior, Sir Everard Featherstonehaugh and his nephew, Jasper Featherstonehaugh.

CHAPTER XLIII.

“BY DEATH, BY DEVIL, YOU SHALL FIGHT.”

SIR EVERARD was a distant relative of the Vanstones, on a brief visit at the Pollards. He was a soldier of service, and had been engaged in the Duke of Buckingham's disastrous attempt to relieve Rochelle. He was a partisan of King Charles ; but so loosely did he wear the chains of loyal allegiance, that it was not till very lately, and after carefully surveying the military situation, that he resolved to offer his own and nephew's services to the King.

It was a sad, bodeful meeting to all present, except the strangers. The two fathers and friends felt it to be more than doubtful that they should meet again in kindly disagreement, so to speak, in the presence of their sons, even should death spare them all. The irritation of defeat, the insolence of victory, would effectually sunder their families, ancestrally united for two or three centuries though they had been.

And to Mabel Vanstone it was the eve of a bitter parting. At that supreme moment, not all her loyal enthusiasm, reinforced by offended pride at finding that even *her* influence did not suffice to win over the playmate of her childhood, the ardent lover of her girl-youth to the side of loyalty and right, could restrain or soothe the mournful passion of regret which suffused her

proud, sad eyes, and assuredly was not, whatever she might affect, entirely due to parting with her only brother.

Aye, and her slightly-veiled, contemptuous recognition of the deferential assiduities of the handsome nephew, which seemed to enrapture that young Paladin, was plainly enough a mere ebullition of wounded vanity—wounded sensitiveness would, perhaps, be the more appropriate phrase; yet she well knew that Archibald Montaigne's jealousy, should she succeed in exciting it, would avail nothing, since love had failed to turn him aside from what he believed to be the path of duty—a path which he was the more firmly resolved to tread now that clouds and thickest darkness seemed to rest upon it.

Captain Richard Vanstone himself was deeply grieved to part, possibly for ever, with his old playmate, school-fellow—his always true and constant friend, under such circumstances, and with the others present earnestly endeavoured to persuade him to dissociate himself, whilst it was yet time, from a failing, hopeless cause.

Archibald Montaigne listened with placid, silent indifference; but the stern smile which slightly curled his firm-set lips and flashed from his dark grey eyes indicated plainly enough that the resolution which had withstood the affectionate entreaties of his father, and the yet more difficult to resist pleadings of Mabel Vanstone's smiles and tears, was not likely to be overborne by the boastful babble of Sir Everard Featherstonehaugh and his prancing nephew.

Sir Everard, piqued by Archibald Montaigne's slighting indifference to his scientific exposition of the impossibility of Rebel-Rabble's successfully

resisting the King's forces, which, as he—Archibald—must know, had been for some time in rapid course of organisation under the superintendence of Princes Rupert and Maurice and other eminent soldiers trained in the German wars—exclaimed in, for so calmly positive a scientific soldier, angry excitement:

“Will you, Master Montaigne, who appear to listen with such supreme contempt to the counsel of your friends and of an experienced soldier, which I may in all modesty claim to be, tell me upon what the Champions of Parliament rely for success?”

“Upon the justice of their great cause, Sir Everard, and the valiant hearts and strong arms of its true followers!”

“Moonshine! Master Archibald. Holiday—gentlewoman's talk! Justice! Great cause!—eh! Fudge! God, be sure of it, young man, ever faithfully fights on the side of the strongest and best disciplined battalions!”

“The history of the world, as I have read it, does not bear out that ‘godless remark,’” replied Archibald Montaigne with some heat. “But I have no wish to waste time in idle words.”

“You forget, Sir Everard,” said the nephew with a sneering smile, divided between Mabel Vanstone and Archibald Montaigne—the sneer to him, the smile for her—“you forget, Sir Everard, that strong reliance is placed by the rebel leaders upon the mighty doings—to come—of a brewer or farmer, and recently extemporised, at the age of fifty, there or thereabout—Colonel of Cavalry, named Cronwell. He is instructing, exercises—they call it drilling—a lot of Yokels at St. Ives, from whom wonders are expected. And I have

little doubt,” added this really favourable specimen of a sixteenth century Military Swell, “that they, to quote Will Shakespeare, will prove ‘very valiant trenchermen—formidable assailants of the larders they may lay siege to or assault.’”

“Master Cromwell, whose age, Jasper, judging by his appearance last week, is, I should say, considerably *under* fifty,” remarked Sir Everard with condescending good-nature, “is, I have no doubt, a well-meaning man enough—brave, too, as most Englishmen are; but the idea of opposing a mere rustic and a middle-aged *tyro* in war, as a Commander of Cavalry too, to such an experienced leader as Prince Rupert, or even Sir Marmaduke Langdale—is, even our young friend must confess, altogether absurd!”

The curl of Archibald Montaigne’s lip, the irony of his smile deepened; but he did not speak.

“I saw Cromwell’s fellows at exercise some days ago,” said Jasper Featherstonehaugh, “a considerable number of them, at least—two or three hundred, perhaps—and a more slovenly, ill set-up lot of Yokels I *never* saw! And what think ye, Sir Everard,” added the young man in quite hearty mirthfulness, “you may hardly believe it, but I declare I witnessed it with my own eyes. Those long-sworded fellows were riding past their colonel at a quick trot, after their fashion, when a much perplexed, curious dog drew upon itself the courageous choler of one of the horsemen, who forthwith pulled bridle and hurled his long sword at the yelping cur! True, upon my honour!”

There was a great laugh at this exemplification of Ironside discipline.

"I fear," said Mabel Vanstone, interposing for the first time, "I fear the Royalists, especially just now, are prone to dangerously underrate their adversaries. I shall be much mistaken," she added, "if Cromwell's Yokels, as you slightly term them, do not prove very awkward enemies to deal with!"

"There is no disputing their 'awkwardness,'" chirruped Jasper Featherstonehaugh; "but I am sure fair Mistress Vanstone cannot, for a moment, doubt what would be the result of an encounter between an accomplished loyal Cavalier and one of this fellow Cromwell's clownish troopers."

"What would be the result of an encounter, for example," retorted Mabel Vanstone with passionate outburst, "between Jasper Featherstonehaugh, one of Prince Rupert's staff, and Archibald Montaigne, 'this fellow Cromwell's' Captain-Lieutenant! Well, I *should* have no misgiving as to the result—not the slightest," added the young lady, as with flashing eyes and blushing crimson, she hastily rose and swept out of the apartment.

Profound silence "with one consent" for several minutes—marked, rather than broken, by Captain Richard Vanstone's low, cogitative whistle. Archibald Montaigne's eyes, veiled by his hand, were fixed on the floor. He would not that anyone, except, perhaps, Mabel herself, should observe the fiery light of joy which her words, and strongly emphasized, scornful tone, had kindled.

Jasper Featherstonehaugh's eyes flamed too—not delightedly. Captain Richard Vanstone continued, by snatches, his low, meditative whistle; the two knights dubiously contemplated each

other, and Montaigne senior refilled his pipe. Both he and Sir Richard, spite of King James' "counterblast," had long since taken lovingly to tobacco.

"No misgiving as to the result of an encounter between Jasper Featherstonehaugh and Archibald Montaigne?" presently burst forth Sir Everard's nephew, he having partially, at least, recovered his supercilious audacity. "Neither have I any misgiving as to the result. Suppose, Master Archibald Montaigne," he added, "we decide the question at once; *I* am quite ready."

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" broke in Sir Everard Featherstonehaugh. "Let us, if you please, have no vapouring here. If you two should chance to meet in a fair field, fight away; and Sir Richard and I will drink, as an Irishman might say, 'Success to the victor!' But this is neutral ground; no Cavalier and Roundhead brawlings in this place, if you please. Shall we crack t'other bottle, Sir Richard?" Carried unanimously.

Archibald Montaigne had left the Pollards, and was quietly proceeding on his way homeward, his mind engrossed by those delicious words of Mabel Vanstone, harmoniously placid, when hasty steps close at his heels caused him to turn round. Jasper Featherstonehaugh, in heated, disordered aspect, stood before him.

"Now, Archibald Montaigne, Captain-Lieutenant," exclaimed the furious young man, "now, Archibald Montaigne, Captain-Lieutenant, let us at once decide this issue."

"I am not a duellist," said Montaigne. "Allow me to pass on."

"By death, by devil, you *shall* fight!" shouted

Jasper, drawing his sword, and striking at his adversary with the hilt.

Archibald Montaigne caught the irate Cavalier's wrist, wrenched the sword from his grasp with, it seemed, scarcely an effort, and was about to fling it away.

After a moment's reflective pause he said, "Take back thy sword, Jasper Featherstonehaugh, and be careful never to draw it except in a righteous cause. There is no pretext for private quarrel between thee and me."

Cromwell's Captain-Lieutenant walked quietly on, Prince Rupert's Staff-officer looking after him for some moments in speechless rage. He then turned back towards the Pollards, champing curses as he strode along on everybody in general, not forgetting that insolent minx, Mabel Vanstone, who should one day—Ha!

Some hours after this duel *manqué*, Mabel Vanstone and Archibald Montaigne emerged into the silvery lover-light shed by a full, unclouded moon, from the leafy covert of an old trysting-place not sought by them for several previous months.

There were traces of tears upon the pale, lustrously-pale, face of the beauteous maiden—tears of joy tremulously shadowed with grief—of hope, dimmed by apprehension. Archibald Montaigne was pale too, but the pallor was illumined with the radiance of a perfect, a reconciled love, Mabel having at last recognised the validity of his plea, as enshrined in the loyalist poet's lines:—

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

A dark cloud overshadowed them for the passing evil time, but Hope, which tells so many flattering tales, whispered to them in music-tones distinctly audible to youth and love, though nothing lives 'twixt them and silence, of the joy-time coming, when all fears and doubtings would have passed away, and be remembered only as a sad, mournful tale that has been told.

But that joy-time was to win, and it was the brave man's task and privilege to aid in winning it.

The Ironsides—so called by reason of the long, pointed, ponderous swords they wore—were ready to do their part in uprooting the Upas tree of “kingly divine right;” and the gallant and fully as conscientious Cavaliers were just as eager and determined—to quote the Earl of Strafford—“to vindicate the ancient royalty of the realm from under the conditions and restraints of subjects.”

Those high-blooded Cavaliers were, however—and, it may be, because high-blooded—foolishly prone, as Mabel Vanstone remarked, to undervalue their adversaries. The “Brewer's Bumpkins” was a favourite subject of ridicule with them. One of their leaders, Sir John Lorimer, Bart., a very gallant gentleman of Carlisle, is said to have offered a heavy wager that if Prince Rupert would give him the independent command for four days only of a few colours (companies) of horse, he would bring Cromwell and his Yokels, dead or alive, to the King's camp within that time. Sir John's offer, for some unstated reason, was not accepted; but, as we shall presently see, the gallant officer's meeting with the Brewer was but delayed. They were destined to make each other's acquaintance at “Slash Lane,” after which

there is no report of Sir John having offered a similar wager.

And here I may be permitted, *à propos* of this anecdote, to reflect briefly, in passing, upon the frequent occurrence in war-annals of what may be called the bitter irony of events. A recent instance, out of hundreds that might be quoted, will illustrate that truth.

General Burgoyne was vehement in his place in Parliament, just before the outbreak of the American War of Independence, in his contemptuous depreciation of the American Volunteer-Militia. Thousands of them, he said, being backwoodsmen, could no doubt shoot very well; but what would that avail—"undisciplined and incapable of discipline as they were!" Three or four regiments of British regulars might, he assured the applauding Senate, traverse rebellious America throughout its extent without encountering serious opposition.

Well, this same General Burgoyne, being intrusted with a high command in America, made a brief and a splendid campaign, ending at Saratoga, where he surrendered an army of British troops—the finest trained soldiers in the world—to "a rabble" of Volunteer-Militia, commanded by General Gates—fellows who could only shoot well!

"Slash Lane," on the 12th of October, 1643 was Sir John Lorimer's Saratoga, barring the surrender.

CHAPTER XLIV.

WOUNDED IN BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT.

A SPLENDID morning shone upon the array of yeoman cavalry, drawn up in line, and fully accoutred for active service. It was expected that Colonel Cromwell would shortly address them, and a considerable concourse of the neighbouring inhabitants had assembled to witness the departure of the civilian-soldiers, if the phrase be permissible.

Amongst the spectators were Sir Richard Vanstone, John Montaigne, and Sir Everard Featherstonehaugh. Captain Richard Vanstone and Lieutenant Jasper Featherstonehaugh had left the day previously, under orders from Prince Rupert to join the Marquis of Newcastle, who had been powerfully reinforced from Ireland, and of whom great things were expected.

A fierce shout arose from his troopers, as Colonel Cromwell, accompanied by three or four officers, one of them Montaigne, his Captain-Lieutenant, rode on to the ground.

The soldiers having formed a circle round Cromwell, he addressed them briefly in a sharp, piercing, and, musically considered, harsh, unpleasant voice.

"He would not seek to perplex them," he said, "as was the strange fashion of some commanders, about fighting for the King *and* Parliament. He

was a plain man like themselves, and did not understand such subtleties. It was for Parliament alone, for the liberties of the land, for the establishment of God's righteous rule on earth, that they were going to fight. For himself, if he met King Charles he would as soon discharge his pistol upon him as upon any private man, and any soldier present who was troubled with a conscience that would not let him do the same he would advise to retire from the ranks and go home at once."

A second and fiercer shout was the expected response. Cromwell waved his sword, and the knell of the Royalist cause pealed forth in the blare of the Ironside trumpets, which immediately rang out, signalling the soldiers to march—depart forthwith upon their self-chosen, terrible mission.

"Quite a creditable playing at soldiers, really," said Sir Everard, as he, Sir Richard, and Master Montaigne rode slowly off, "and the fellows really seem to mean it! But what a straggling line; and the horses of all heights and colours—bay, black, white, grey—oh, my certie!"

"Strong, serviceable animals, I'll warrant," said Master Montaigne.

"I don't doubt their being serviceable at the plough, or when trotting to market with a hamper of eggs slung on each side; but as battle chargers!—pooh! They will rear and bolt at the first blurt of field ordnance!"

"I doubt it, Sir Everard," persisted Master Montaigne. "As for the troopers themselves, they are steady, God-fearing men. Soldiers of that stamp are rarely subject to any other fear!"

"That may be, Sir, but pious stiff-neckedness is hardly a virtue in a soldier. Farmer Crom-

well's cavalry, if they don't previously tire of the service, and 'go home,' as their leader just now advised the dubiously loyal or faint-hearts amongst them to do at once, will, before many days have passed, be encountered by the Marquis of Newcastle's well-appointed forces. Rely upon it, Master Montaigne, that when that occurs, your God-fearing troopers, should Cromwell command them to charge, will respectfully demur to obey the order, till they have sought the Lord in prayer, and ascertained that Agag would, did they comply with the Colonel's command, be certainly delivered into their hands! You smile, Master Montaigne, and possibly I may somewhat overcolour the, to me, ludicrous character of these levies. Be assured of this, however," added Sir Everard seriously, "and I wish we could have impressed the fact upon your son, that this mad rebellion will be stamped out, and speedily too, never again to trouble the nation."

"I myself," said Sir Richard Vanstone, "believe that for many years Church, Crown, and Coronet will, in this rank-revering, order-loving England, prove more than a match for Conventicle and Commonwealth—that new-fangled name for a Republic."

"My son," said Master Montaigne, "is certainly no Republican; very far indeed from being one. I have heard him say Republicans in this country are limited to two very distinct factions of the people—the Philosophers and the Poets. The first, because wedded to a pedantic theory, utterly inapplicable to an ancient, settled realm like this; the other, from sheer incapacity to comprehend any other equitable rule of Government, than that of numbers."

"And what," asked Sir Everard, "may be Cromwell's Captain-Lieutenant's notion of a perfect Government?"

"My son's notion, and my notion," retorted Master Montaigne, "of a government befitting a free people is a hereditary, limited monarchy, in which the Sovereign administers in righteousness laws enacted by the representatives of the people."

"The monarch, in fact, to be a splendid cypher, a gorgeous pageant—filling a position which ambitious men would also strive after! I know that this is the notion, not only of your son," interposed Sir Richard, "but of very many well-meaning opponents of the divine right of Kings, and I sometimes fear that to this complexion, we, in these islands, must come at last."

"God speed the coming of that time!" said Master Montaigne. "But here we are at the Pollards—upon neutral ground."

There could be no doubt that Sir Everard Featherstonehaugh's estimate of the military value of Cromwell's cavalry would soon be tested. They were sweeping through Lincolnshire overawing, disarming "Malignants" as they passed. Stamford and Burleigh House had been taken, when young General Cavendish, second son of the Earl of Devonshire, was detached by Newcastle with "21 colours of Horse and 4 of Dragoons"—more than double the number of the men commanded by Cromwell; but Newcastle was a cautious General, and would leave nothing to chance—to arrest their progress.

General Cavendish came up with Colonel Cromwell near Grantham. The Royalist commander, confident in the numbers and superior

discipline of his men, began manœuvring, his only fear apparently being that some of the Rebels might escape.

Cromwell promptly drew up his men in line, not a very compact one probably, and gave out the first verse of a psalm. As the last unwavering accents died away, the swords of the Ironsides flashed in the sun, the piercing tones of their leader, as he galloped along the front, bade them charge in the name of the Most High God, the trumpet sounded, and commencing "with a pretty round trot," the Ironsides burst furiously upon the Royalists, instantly overthrowing them with merciless slaughter. "I believe," said Cromwell, in his letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons, "I believe some of our soldiers slew two or three men a-piece."

Cromwell's next considerable exploit was the relief of Gainsborough, which, by the neglect of Sir Thomas Fairfax, had been left almost totally unprovided with ammunition. The Marquis of Newcastle having routed Fairfax at Atherton Moor, was advancing against the town, at the head of an overwhelming force.

When Colonel Cromwell heard of the strait in which Gainsborough found itself, he went off to its relief without a moment's loss of time; but fiery, active though he was, the advanced division of Newcastle's army had preceded him.

When the Ironsides arrived in sight of Gainsborough, they found the Royalist force, under General Cavendish, outnumbering themselves by at least three to one, drawn up on an eminence commanding the town.

The position chosen by General Cavendish—an officer of great promise—was thought by him to

be impregnable; certainly so, if assailed by cavalry alone, defended as it was by both artillery and infantry, and unapproachable except by making a gap in a high strong fence at the base of the hill.

The dust raised by the approach of the main body of Newcastle's so lately-victorious force, was already visible in the distance. Cromwell, had he been an indecisive soldier, would have had no time for hesitation. He did *not* hesitate a moment. A sufficient gap, spite of a plunging artillery fire, was hewed in the fence—the Ironsides passed through, drew up by sections, and, with their Colonel leading, charged *up the hill* upon the Royalists, pushed them over the ridge, and, pursuing them into an adjacent swamp, slew them without mercy.

General Cavendish himself was slain, "killed." Cromwell's letter to Speaker Lenthall states, "killed by a thrust under the short ribs by my Captain-Lieutenant."

Powder and other stores were quickly passed into Gainsborough, and then it behoved Farmer Cromwell to retire; Newcastle's army being by that time close at hand.

The Ironsides retired slowly—disdainfully halting now and again, in challenging defiance. Newcastle made no attempt to intercept them. He was probably glad that they *did* go, slowly as it might be.

This daring exploit not only vividly flashed the name of Cromwell before the eyes of the contending armies, but procured the victor a valiant Lieutenant; his eldest daughter a husband.

"Captain Treton," wrote Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson, "was so charmed with Colonel Cromwell's

conduct in the Gainsborough affair, that he immediately exchanged (he belonged to Colonel Thornhaugh's regiment) into the Ironsides, and about three years afterwards married Bridget, Cromwell's eldest daughter."

Had Sir Everard Featherstonehaugh witnessed the "mere rustic, the middle-aged tyro's" encounters with General Cavendish, his opinion of Colonel Cromwell's efficiency as a cavalry officer might have undergone some modification.

It happened, however, that Sir Everard did not hear of those brilliant affairs—brilliant in themselves, but far more so in significant promise—until some months later, he having, two days after the Ironsides left St. Ives to try their 'prentice hands in actual warfare, been ordered to join Sir Edward Carteret, in the Island of Jersey.

His nephew, Jasper Featherstonehaugh, had, on the contrary, been too immediately intimate with the Ironsides in those encounters. He and Captain Richard Vanstone were on the Staff of General Cavendish, and at the first affair near Grantham, the Captain came to serious, the Lieutenant to trifling, grief. In other words, the brother of Mabel Vanstone was dangerously wounded—mortally, it was at first supposed, whilst Jasper the lover came off with a comparatively slight hurt.

In the Gainsborough conflict, at which Captain Vanstone in consequence of his wound did not, fortunately for himself, "assist," Lieutenant Featherstonehaugh was seriously wounded, unhorsed, and might have been left to perish in the swamp where he fell, had not Archibald Montaigne, "my Captain-Lieutenant," who killed

General Cavendish "with a thrust under the short ribs," been attracted by the young Cavalier's cries for help.

The Captain-Lieutenant directed some of the men to bear the unfortunate Royalist carefully off the field. When the hurt was seen to, it was found that the left leg had been broken by a pistol bullet. Amputation, at first deemed necessary, was avoided, but at the cost of lameness for life—a bitter penalty for one who especially prided himself on his personal gifts! Jasper Featherstonehaugh's cavalry career was finished.

The Captain-Lieutenant had also been wounded just at the close of the fight, in the right hand, by a chance spent ball. The wound, if lock-jaw did not supervene, would soon be healed; but, meanwhile, being unable to hold a pen, he was obliged to engage one Gilbert Hazlewood as amanuensis. This man, a hard drinking unprincipled young Squire from Hampshire, had had his left arm smashed by a cannon ball at the battle of Edge Hill. He professed and was believed to be an enthusiastic Parliamentarian, notwithstanding that for some years previous to his "awakening," he had consorted with the ungodly. A very specious clever fellow was Gilbert Hazlewood, and his return to the strait and narrow path had been joyfully hailed by friends and neighbours, no one doubting the good faith of the recovered prodigal.

Thus trusted, and being an adroit penman and accountant, Hazlewood was placed at the head of Colonel Cromwell's commissariat—somewhat of an anomalous employment, one would suppose, at the outset of the amateur campaign. He,

however, filled up his time profitably enough by writing letters for officers and privates temporarily disabled or otherwise incapacitated from conducting their own correspondence.

Gilbert had, moreover, the imitative faculty as regarded penmanship strongly developed; so much so, that it was almost impossible for man or woman to distinguish his or her writing from Hazlewood's imitation thereof.

The man does not appear to have boasted of this faculty, which he so rarely exercised that only a few of the ungodly, in whose tents (or tap-rooms) he in his backsliding days had, when in London, dwelt for a season, knew he possessed it.

Captain-Lieutenant Archibald Montaigne took up his abode till such time as his hand should be healed, at a cottage close by that in which Lieutenant Featherstonehaugh was lodged. There was a considerable number of invalid Ironsides quartered in the same village. It thus fell out that Gilbert Hazlewood fulfilled the duty of amanuensis to both Montaigne and Featherstonehaugh.

The jealous dislike felt by Jasper Featherstonehaugh for Archibald Montaigne had been exasperated, rather than mildened, by the latter's generous, but—as the cankered, crippled Cavalier felt—triumphing, humbling help. The disabling deformity to which he was condemned, whilst Montaigne would be revelling in lusty life, still more envenomed this festering hate, and he would have pawned his soul to be avenged on his exultant rival.

The possession of means to do ill often makes ill deeds done. This was emphatically the case with Jasper Featherstonehaugh. He appears to

have quickly discovered the utterly base metal of which Gilbert Hazlewood was compounded, beneath the smooth lacquer which to incurious eyes concealed it; and the Lieutenant happening to command, both actually and in prospect, ample funds, Hazlewood lent himself, body and soul, to further his employer's purposes.

The task was easy of accomplishment under the circumstances. Letters in those days were generally forwarded by special messenger, and Hazlewood one day received a parcel of them from Festonhaugh in Hampshire. Amongst them there were two for Archibald Montaigne; one from his father—the other from Mabel Vanstone. That it was from the lady of his love and life, the superscripton was sufficient proof to the Captain-Lieutenant, the instant his flashing glance lightened on it.

"The messenger," said Hazlewood, "leaves on his return early to-morrow. Will you be able to write yourself, if you intend answering your letters?"

"Quite able, Hazlewood. Come for my letters two or three hours from now."

Gilbert called, as ordered, for the Captain-Lieutenant's letters. There was no letter awaiting him, and Captain Montaigne himself had left an hour previously to rejoin the Ironsides. "Captain Montaigne ought not to have joined so soon," said an invalid soldier who had been attending upon him. "I never saw him looking so ill as when I helped him into the saddle, which, without me, he could hardly have reached. It cannot be the wound in his hand; some internal hurt which the doctor knew not of, that true soldier of the Lord must have received."

Had Hazlewood chosen to do so, he could have clearly told the nature of that hurt—ay, and have prescribed the infallible remedy. Mabel Vanstone's letter, couched in civil, respectful, but decisive terms, declined further correspondence with Captain-Lieutenant Montaigne. "Her better mind had returned, and she would never clasp in hers a homicidal hand, red with the blood of the anointed one's faithful servitors."

At almost the same hour that Archibald Montaigne, his brain on fire, his eyes dilate with dismay, flaming with indignant astonishment, was reading that letter, Mabel Vanstone, wildly sobbing, had one from him before her. He, Archibald Montaigne was dying, and his only remaining hope in life was that the Eternal would grant him to see, to bid a farewell to his beloved—"a long farewell till they should meet in Heaven!"

Sir Richard Vanstone was absent from home; would not return till late on the morrow, and half-an-hour after receiving that warning message and invitation, Mabel was speeding on horseback, accompanied by Robert Hinds, a stout young fellow in her father's service, towards the village where the letter stated her dying lover lay.

I scarcely need say she found him not at the place indicated. Where, and under what circumstances Mabel Vanstone and Archibald Montaigne were fated to meet again, should they ever meet, we shall only ascertain by following the Captain-Lieutenant's war-career.

CHAPTER XLV

VIRTUE *versus* VILLAINY.

THE love-hunger gnawing at his heart, strengthened rather than enfeebled the young soldier's arm. He would wipe from the tablet of his thoughts—that is he vowed he would—and succeeded in doing so about as well as did Hamlet himself—would wipe from the tablet of his thoughts, all trivial fond records, and live only to fulfil the high behests of patriotic, righteous duty.

He signally fulfilled that duty, according to his view of it, at the encounter before spoken of between Sir John Lorimer and Colonel Cromwell, on the 12th October, 1643.

Cromwell had joined the Earl of Manchester's forces, forming with his cavalry the advanced guard of that noble commander's army.

Suddenly, and when slow-moving Manchester was some miles behind, the Ironsides came, and crowned the ridge of a long declivity within pistol-range of Sir John Lorimer's formidable array.

Fairfax was with Cromwell, and impressed with the extreme disparity of the forces opposed to each other, counselled inaction till Manchester came up. Cromwell himself is said to have hesitated. "What dost thou advise, Archibald Montaigne?" asked the stern Puritan.

"I doubt if our men would turn back, if even you commanded them to do so. Look at them, Colonel Cromwell."

Colonel Cromwell did look, saw there was no hesitation amongst his soldiers, and his own, if he had felt any, vanished in an instant. One verse of the triumphant psalm, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" passes along the flashing line, the trumpet rings out, and away spring that astonishing cavalry, sweeping before them the Royalists "as tempest lifts and drives the summer dust."

A close volley fired in their very faces had not for an instant checked them, and the hot fight, so hot that Cromwell was himself unhorsed, but managed to catch and mount the sorry horse of a slain trooper, soon became a massacre. The fugitives were pursued almost to the gates of Lincoln, and the Ironsides, whilst returning through "Slash Lane," as, in memory of the bitter fight, the locality was named, and wiping their dripping swords in their horses' manes, again uplifted the exultant psalm, the victors' incense to the God of Mercy, the Prince of Peace.

"Who will bring me this Cromwell?" exclaimed King Charles, at hearing of Lorimer's defeat. Bring him Cromwell! As easily have brought and presented him with the two Americas! Not only the King, but all discerning men, perceived that a new element, that of individual enthusiasm—not the straw on fire of passionate excitement, but the white hot steel of earnest purpose—had been evoked and would prove of far greater efficiency than the marching, counter-marching, and rule and line tactics of Essex and Manchester.

A passing glance at the exploits of the Volunteers of '42 may not be altogether out of place here. The utter overthrow and rout of Prince Rupert and his cavaliers at Marston Moor, where, to quote Cromwell's letter to the speaker, "The Lord made them as stubble to our swords—"

" At Naseby where,
Their heads all stooping low,
Their points all in a row,"

they swooped upon and dispersed the almost victorious centre of the King's army. That done, they prepared to charge Prince Rupert's horse; but neither the commands or the entreaties of his Highness or of the King, his uncle, could persuade the cavaliers to await the onset. They had made the acquaintance of the Ironsides at Marston Moor, and could not be induced on any consideration to renew it.

Finis coronat opus. The work of the Ironsides was substantially accomplished; Kingly Absolutism struck down in the British Isles beyond chance of rehabilitation as it seemed; and that by men whose drill would have driven a Sergeant of the Guards mad.

True, an orthodox believer in the doctrine that in war there is salvation to be found in standing armies, might say. True, but the Volunteer Ironsides had only to contend with raw troops like themselves, better drilled, the Irish army especially, no doubt, but not regular soldiers.

Not so, Mr. Sergeant Pipeclay. Cromwell, when Protector, formed an alliance with the King of France, and despatched four thousand of his soldiers to reinforce the army of the world-famous Marshal Turenne, then about to besiege Dunkirk.

Turenne decided that Dunkirk could only be reduced in mathematical zig-zag fashion. The English commander demurred, and asked the Marshal to give him leave to try what the Cromwellian soldiers could do. Marshal Turenne consented. The English General knocked a hole in the walls sufficiently wide for his men to pass through, sent them in at a run, and Dunkirk was taken. The French King, in reward of so great a service, made a present of Dunkirk to the English nation. Charles the Second, not very long after the glorious Restoration, sold it back to France for four hundred thousand crowns, which sum his Majesty graciously dispensed amongst his mistresses.

* * * * *

Captain-Lieutenant, now Colonel Archibald Montaigne, has had his fill of glory, fears indeed that the victory of Right over Privilege has been even too complete. Cromwell, seduced by the vanities of power, was proving false to his great trust, and he half-determined to retire from the public service.

Whither shall he betake himself? Not to Festonhaugh. There to him Desolation sits enthroned. His father has been many months dead ; Sir Richard Vanstone, crushed in spirit by the loss of his daughter, went before him ; his old schoolmate, Richard Vanstone, the younger, was slain in the cruel war at Marston Moor.

And Mabel ! The very thought of her stings like a scorpion. He has heard from Gilbert Hazlewood that she left her father's home with young Robert Hinds, to meet Jasper Featherstonehaugh, with whom, as he, Hazlewood, knows,

she had made an assignation, and has not since been heard of anywhere. Gilbert cannot tell where Jasper Featherstonehaugh has hidden himself; nor has the youth Hinds been since heard of.

"Colonel Montaigne," said the soldier who, it will be remembered, assisted the Captain-Lieutenant to mount his horse soon after he received the last letter from Mabel Vanstone—"Colonel Montaigne," said the soldier, abruptly entering his room, "I have heard where Sir Everard Featherstonehaugh and his nephew may be found."

"Where!—where!" exclaimed the Colonel, leaping to his feet with wild excitement. "Where?—who told you?"

"Sir Everard Featherstonehaugh," returned the man, "and his nephew are in the Island of Jersey, serving, I don't know in what capacity, under Sir George Carteret. Blake, our general at sea, is, you know, preparing an expedition against that island."

Colonel Montaigne was a religious man—no question of that; but he greatly overestimated his own Christian charity and forbearance. The old Adam was still powerful within him. He had not the slightest doubt that Jasper Featherstonehaugh had by force or fraud—or why had he kept himself concealed—effected the ruin of Mabel Vanstone; and it warmed the sickness of his soul to but imagine for an instant himself as her avenger.

Colonel Montaigne left London for Portsmouth the next day. Blake, Admiral and General at sea, gladly availed himself of the offer of his services; and the Colonel was one of the first to leap ashore when the gallant resistance of the islanders had been finally overcome.

Sir Everard Featherstonehaugh was one of the prisoners captured in Elizabeth Castle. To Colonel Montaigne's fierce questioning about Mabel Vanstone, Sir Everard replied with his usual calm self-possession and apparent frankness.

His nephew and Mabel Vanstone had long since arrived in Jersey, not together, he thought. He did not know whether they were married or not. He supposed they were, but was not sure. Miss Vanstone had obtained the protection of Lady Carteret, almost from the first hour she arrived in the island; and he, Sir Everard, had been told that Lady Carteret insisted upon the form of marriage being gone through. However that might be, his nephew and the young lady had managed to escape from the island several days previously, intending to join Charles the Second and the Royalists at the Hague.

Fevered, half-maddened by rage, Colonel Montaigne—"no duellist," as he formerly boasted—endeavoured to force a mortal quarrel upon Sir Everard himself; and but for that person's age would—at least he said so—have compelled his acceptance of a challenge, by kicks, blows, any manner of violence.

Leaving Sir Everard still in a state of wild excitement, Colonel Montaigne, whilst striding along the causeway from Castle to shore, left dry by the receding tide, met Robert Hinds.

He recognised him instantly, and pounced upon the astounded young man as if he knew him to have been an accomplice of the villain that had lured Mabel Vanstone to destruction. An explanation quickly took place, and in, as one might almost say, less than no time, Colonel Montaigne, Robert Hinds, and half-a-dozen troopers were galloping

as if for life towards Bouley Bay. We will precede them there by a few minutes.

"It is time, Mabel Vanstone," Jasper Featherstonehaugh is saying; "it is time Mabel Vanstone, to have done with these absurd violences. Lady Carteret can no longer shield you, and I still offer loyal, honourable marriage."

"Hound!—villain!—confederate forger with this wretch, Hazlewood!—I despise, scorn, spit at, defy you, vile miscreant that you are!"

"No more of this, my fine lady! My wife, or worse, you must and shall be! Hinds, your messenger to Lady Carteret has, it is true, escaped; but the boats are ready, and the birds will be flown when he returns. Hazlewood, whistle for the men!"

Gilbert obeyed, and half-a-dozen armed seamen entered the hut.

"Now then, madam, no nonsense! Never mind for your screaming—— Ha!"

"Defend yourself, accursed wretch!" shouted Colonel Montaigne, striking the astounded Jasper with the flat of his sword.

Jasper, yelling with dismay and rage, drew instantly, and made a furious pass at the Colonel. It was parried, and the next instant Archibald Montaigne's sword was driven through Jasper's body. At the same moment Gilbert and Hinds fired at each other. Hazlewood's pistol-bullet grazed the temple of young Hinds;—*his* crashed through the forger's skull.

"Mabel!—beloved Mabel!" There could be no word-answer made by the lady, trembling, fainting, wildly sobbing, with a joy too great for utterance, in her deliverer's arms.

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Valentine Montaigne folded up the manuscript, and returned it to his pocket—Diana's eyes were fixed on him with something warmer than mere interest apparent in them.

Andrew Lorimer's arm suddenly detached itself from a too suspicious proximity to Isabel's waist as she exclaimed, "Why, Valentine, my great-great-grand-mother was your great-grand-father's mother-in-law. We are relations—come to my arms my long lost cousin."

CHAPTER XLVI.

MARRIAGE BELLS.

MONTE-CERRO, after his encounter with Valentine Montaigne, made the best of his way to the cottage where Maddalena lived. He was bleeding profusely and in great pain ; and the instant she saw this, all her woman's heart went out with the old love towards him.

She washed and bound up his wound, she gave him wine, then started for the doctor, who when he came approved of all that had been done, but ordered perfect quiet, and forbade removal.

For a time all went well, but suddenly a change for the worse became apparent, and a severe attack of erysipelas set in.

Doctor Lorimer was unremitting in his care and attention, but it was Maddalena's incessant watchfulness and nursing that saved the life of the Marquis.

Somehow, no one knew how, the rumour of Lorimer being heir to a baronetcy, and having thrown up fifty thousand a year, had come to Monte-Cerro's ears, and whether it was this or from gratitude, he gradually permitted the doctor to exercise an influence over him, such as no human being had exercised before.

One day Andrew told him of the approaching nuptials of Diana and Valentine. He sighed heavily but took no further notice for a time,

then he said with a deeper sigh, "I wonder who will inherit all my acres when I am gone. Alas! there is no son to succeed me."

Constant watching and loss of sleep told, as was to be expected, on Maddalena's never too robust constitution; she fell sick, grew worse, and threatened to go into a decline. There was a cause for her delicacy, the doctor discovered it, and immediately revealed it to the Marquis.

At first Monte-Cerro was incredulous—then he shouted, "Doctor you must save her—I wish it from gratitude for all her devotion, but more, far more, now that you tell me there is another life dependent on hers. What can I do? I will do anything—go anywhere—spend everything so that her life be saved."

"Marry her," advised the doctor very quietly, "it is the only way to save her life." Monte-Cerro acted on the advice within a month, and Maddalena Ferriato became in reality the Marchioness, and took up her residence at the Hall.

Andrew Lorimer's father did not long enjoy his title and estates. He was seized with sudden illness. His son hurried up to Carlisle on receiving the information from Lawyer Lubbock, but was only just in time to receive his benediction and his last breath!

Sir Andrew Lorimer, Bart., became one of the wealthiest men in England; but he was not spoilt by prosperity. His medical knowledge and ample purse were always at the disposal of the suffering or the poor.

He retained his cottage at Festonhaugh, and spent a portion of every summer there, and of course he married Isabel Vanstone. He found her nothing loth when he asked her; she only looked

up shyly into his honest face, and said, "Thank God, I did so fear you would lose your heart to Diana and not win her in the end, but now that she is to marry Valentine next month, and you are to marry me, why there's not much fear. Is there darling?"

THE END.

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